HATE

THE USES OF A POWERFUL EMOTION

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Translated by Jackie de Pont

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THE ACT OF HATING

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Preface to the English Translation

A book is but a snapshot of a moment in time. The real productive work begins after publication, when the book finds a reflection in the world and the world in the book. When, as with a curved mirror, the light and images scatter in all directions, forming startling new patterns and symbols that point us towards new ways of thinking and acting.

But what happens, when the networks of meaning in the world become so loose that they can hardly reflect anything anymore – and no longer want to? How productive is the work, when the world to which the book is bound, refuses reflection? Refuses to look in the mirror? Refuses to see its hate and its ugliness? (These words share a common root in German, similar to hate and hatefulness.)

I have struggled to find the words to describe what has taken place over the past few months in Germany – where I live and work – as I was adapting this book for the English translation. I do know that the words exist, because many fantastic, critical colleagues and friends of mine have written them down in long essays. But, for a long time, the ugliness of the political environment revealed itself to me in sudden flashes, in snippets of conversation and personal experiences that blinded me like a spotlight on a mirror. And, ironically, it was these same conversations that, time and again, confirmed the theses of this book.

In liberal societies, hate is a feature of the categorical *Other*, and thus a dehumanising ascription that rhetorically and politically shifts people and their political concerns into the realm of the unspeakable. It fabricates monsters who threaten Western values – like, for example, the bureaucratised, civil agreement to non-violence. For this civil agreement is there to keep an alleged ‘chaos’ at bay – alongside the militarisation of Germany’s domestic and foreign affairs, the gesture of moral self-

aggrandisement, and the German *raison d'état* in relation to Israel, which has been defended by every means available, not least since October 2023.

In November 2023, I was on the Metro in Berlin. A news headline on the onboard TV caught my eye: 'Hate Protest Marches through Berlin.' No context, no commentary, and no characterisation of who was actually protesting, or what they were protesting against or for. By chance, I happened to know that a protest was taking place on that day against Israel's genocide in Gaza. But this news report sent a clear message: the protestors, and above all, the Palestinians, do not have a political cause or legitimacy. They are nothing but masses of hating bodies.

And that is exactly what this book is about: the politics of hate. It is about the different forms that hate can take – the different modes of hate, as I call them. For example, the way hate is used as a dehumanising ascription in colonial tradition to justify oppression, dispossession and disenfranchisement. The way people are branded as consumed by hate; as irrational entities incapable of governing themselves, occupying public spaces or having a say in the future. In liberal societies, the ascription of hate is an absolute judgement, bestowed upon the condemned simply because of their existence or what they embody politically. No matter how they express themselves, no matter how they argue their case, no matter how and if they defend themselves – they are always deemed the agents of evil.

These are the politics of hate that we have observed over the past months in Germany, unfiltered and in all their ugliness. We have seen people and groups in solidarity with Palestine denied their rights of assembly and of free speech, and all too often decried as 'antisemites' and 'terrorist sympathisers'. We have seen excessive police violence transform migrant neighbourhoods, especially in Berlin, into occupied territories, under the guise of subduing the hate of 'dissidents'. We have seen the vilification and brutal clearing of student protests, the attempt to withdraw funds from critical scientists at the Ministry of Science, and the closure of migrant institutions on suspicions of antisemitism. Yes, suspicion alone was good enough; proof was rarely considered worth the effort.

And so, paradoxically, we have seen the dominant politics of hate come to embody exactly that which they condemn: political and cultural elites have shown themselves to be devoid of reason and logical argument. Instead, they have emotionalised the public discourse to the point of

hysteria. They have *hatified* it. And, in the same breath, they have reduced a historical conflict in the Levant region to a conflict born of blind hate. They continue to actively ignore the historical and ongoing ethnic cleansing and occupation of the region for the general political interests of various global political players, and portray hate as the origin, not the by-product, of a brutal reality spreading across national borders.

And they who, out of a *raison d'état*, label others as hateful, are relieved of any obligation to justify their own hatred.

This book seems to have anticipated all of that. And no, not because I'm clairvoyant, but because the authoritarian character that Germany's government has shown in recent months is nothing new. That is something I will address in this book. Something that will make this book very uncomfortable for many people in this country.

Yet still, there is more to tell: they tried to uninvite me from literature festivals. Once, because the organisers felt uneasy having a left-wing, non-white author speak openly about hate after 7 October – as if my heritage, my system-critical position and my public criticism of the genocide in Gaza could rob me of the ability to speak publicly, deliberately and with nuance in my own area of expertise. I was told of bookstore owners and employees who dissuaded customers at the counter from buying this very book. And there was an elderly woman, who after a reading of mine, named me as responsible for World War III. She said I was bringing hate back into Europe after seventy years of continual European peace … Well, hmm. It was already spring of 2023 by then. I asked her what peace she was talking about. The peace in the imperial war zones? In the Yugoslav war? It became clear that many people have been living in collective amnesia for a long time, imprisoned by the lie of a 'Peace, Love and Pancakes' society, as I describe it in this book.[1] For them, hate is so distant and so ugly (hateful), that it shouldn't even be thought about.

In this book, I have given a lot of space to European antisemitism and Jewish resistance against German fascism – with attention to left-wing, democratic and even right-wing individuals and groups. I have shone a spotlight on the hate of those whom fascism attempted to wipe out in the Holocaust. That failed, however, to stop the accusations against me. In a city where similar attempts had been made to uninvite me from a festival – because of my alleged 'communist' status – two local journalists wrote an article about me. They claimed that, if one were to think through the

arguments made in this book, they could come to the conclusion that I condone the massacre of Jewish civilians – a level of mental gymnastics that makes my jaw drop. Along with an author in a reactionary Swiss gentleman's newspaper, they also labelled me 'shameless' – a compliment I am more than happy to accept.

On that note – this book you are about to read is not only shameless but also gentle, doubtful and questioning, reaching and grappling at tenderness. Which is why – although the vast majority of reviews were spectacularly positive – I was so staggered by some of the fierce and furious responses I received.

It was as if I was in some sort of horror-comedy. Trapped in a bizarre nightmare surrounded by my own words and forced to shadowbox perceived truths and assumptions, to fight against a dangerous chain of association along the lines of: 'Whoever is a communist, is likely also an antisemite. Whoever writes about hate, also wants Jews to die. And whoever hates, cannot be human.'

But in this nightmare, new alliances were formed and together we wrote our own comedies. My friends and I often joked that I should have written a different book instead, one about how much I hate Germany. Or the abolition of Germany. *Mad in Germany: The New Morgenthau Plan*. We came up with many titles. It's still a work in progress.

Meanwhile, in recent months, I began to see my book in another, more critical light. Whoever writes about Jewish resistance and revenge cannot ignore the question of 'what "Jewish revenge" actually looks like in practice, and who bears its consequences', Alex Cocotas writes in his essay published in the magazine *The Baffler* in May 2024.[2] He's talking about the deliberate trend towards stories of Jewish revenge in the German cultural scene in recent years, especially coming from the progressive, left-wing side, with the objective of disrupting the current German 'theatre of remembrance' – a fictional narrative in which gestures of remembrance lead to German-Jewish reconciliation post–World War II and the German nation is depicted as reformed, leading the fight against antisemitism – and affirming the long-suppressed notion of Jewish irreconcilability, in which Jewish existence asserts itself beyond the role of the good, passive victim. So far, so good. Yet, the quote from Alex Cocotas had me ruminating. In his essay, he criticises the fact that Jewish revenge narratives, although explicitly restricted to a German context, often claim universal validity. And

that some authors in Germany who flirt with these narratives now even include religiously fanatical, racist Zionists, such as Meir Kahane, in their glorious pantheon of Jewish avengers.

In the German original version of this book, unlike the English translation, my references to Jewish revenge were also restricted to the German context. When I was writing this book in 2022, I had thought it would be enough to propose the model of the autonomous administration in Rojava, North and East Syria, as a positive alternative to those revenge politics that later evolved into violent nationalistic movements. And I still do. With their model of democratic confederalism beyond ethnonationalist projects, and a radical democratic right of self-determination for all peoples of the region (Kurds, Arabs, Armenians, Syrians, Turkmen, Jews and many more) they explore what I call – in reference to my first book – policies of ‘radical tenderness’. Rojava shows us that nationalism, capitalism, colonialism and policies of forced migration in the Middle East are not incontestable. And that cycles of hate and revenge can be broken, and transformed.

I firmly believe that this form of autonomous self-government is a model example for the Middle East, and could bring widespread peace and justice, for Jews as well as Muslims. And I am convinced that hate always exists, or is politically sowed, there, where people are not given the opportunity to govern themselves.

As we will see in this book, the German nation has been complicit in a long list of genocides. From Dêrsim and Afrîn in Kurdistan, all the way to Chile. And just as long is the list of denials. Germany is a master in creating its monsters. Jerome Cohen wrote in his seven theses on the culture of monsters: ‘They [the monsters] ask us why we have created them.’ It is a question that Germany wants nothing to do with. And yet, without intending to, Germany has found itself reflected in this book. We have all seen it rear its ugly head. Once again.

So, what remains of hate after these recent months? In this book, I write that those accused of being hateful must deny this accusation at all costs – so as not to corroborate their inhumanity. And yet these past few months have left me more convinced than ever, that we do need a strategic, resistant hate, as I describe it. Yes, we are hateful. But not in the way that those in power expect.

To paraphrase Susan Sontag: the ability to hate is, much like the ability to say no, the essential condition for understanding. Without this capacity, how can we radically question political structures? Without the option to say no, how can we demand change? Without understanding political structures, how can we hate them? How can we call them into question?

Hate doesn't want to reform; it wants to abolish. Yet, in the same breath, this urge to destroy needs to be accompanied by diverse policies of tenderness, to construct, pre-empt and affirm the new future that we are fighting for. Hate is an advancement of knowledge. Because we can only deal with and fight against that which we can see. That which we want to see. This is an irreconcilable book, which based on the assumption of our irreconcilability with violence, domination and exploitation, wants to explore authentic spaces of reconciliation. To do so, it puts political feelings – their potential, their contradictions and simultaneities – under the microscope.

I am often asked what it is that makes feelings political. Political is the description we give to conditional relationships between people, objects and phenomena in the world, which have at their foundation a certain tension, friction, conflict, a certain contradiction and/or rebellion. To label something as political means to claim with conviction that these relationships can be changed. To claim that our feelings can drive change, and also that our conditions of existence, and our feelings towards them, can change. To recognise that they are manufactured. That they have a history, and a future which lies in our hands.

It is not a matter of changing the individual by critically reviewing their feelings. It's not about chasing a fantasy where we can change everything all at once. Instead, it's a first step. It's about viewing our relationships to each other, and the world, differently. It's about picking up the mirror and adjusting it again and again, until the light hits at a different angle and the image transforms. So that, through these radical shifts, the parts and the whole automatically begin to change alongside one another.

Every reflection in the mirror, every shape that appears even just for a second, is also the face of a monster. As Antonio Gramsci said: 'The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born: now is the time of monsters.' Monsters, that promise another world beyond our mirrors.

June 2024

Prologue

sound. the water serpent's breath: a depth as vast as my hatred
Wanda Coleman, 'Beaches.
Why I Don't Care For Them'[1]

This book begins where unease no longer simply prickles but starts to nag and grind. Where, out of the static hum, a raw, sharp noise pierces through. A roar, a flinch, a shock. It presses on my ears. I hold my breath. That's hate. I recognise it. It is hate that shouts from the streets and whispers in conservative homes – quiet, very quiet, whispers of approval when people perish at Europe's borders. I have seen hate flicker in my parents' eyes and heard it in their screams. I catch it in the threatening messages that lie in wait in my inbox and feel it bubble up in the revenge fantasies that follow. I have hated; I still hate. I breathe out. Yes: hate, I know it well.

It's the summer of 2021, and I'm sitting in front of my computer. Two dozen faces eye me through the screen – Zoom. The students of a small-town university in western Germany have invited me to an online reading of my first book. I talk in-depth about tenderness as a political practice, about a radically tender society, in which political conditions – conditions of living, housing and working – must be shaped so that all people have the resources to turn to one another, to politicise their relationships and to recognise each other in their interdependence.

And to shape this interdependence positively and productively. That is my vision: a radically tender society, no, even better, a radically tender world order! Liberated from patriarchy, capitalism, imperialism and other systems of oppression, that render human bodies sites of domination and submission.

In the question round following my reading, from a pixelated face in the virtual audience, the following words come flying at me: 'If we support a tender society, does that then mean that we also have to show tenderness

towards Nazis?' I stare at the screen. The cogs in my head jam together making a cracking sound; a cloud of smoke begins to rise, blocking my mind's eye. I can't decide, *ağlayayım mı, güleyim mi*, should I cry or laugh? 'I didn't actually read the book', the person asking adds as an afterthought. I wish that could have soothed me. Because, in the following days, the question became an incessant droning in my head. What the hell did I do wrong? What kind of book did I write to make someone think, even for a second, that Nazis and tenderness could even exist in the same sentence?

However, at the online reading, I answer with strained composure. I keep my head up and try not to expose the cloud of self-doubt that is making its way into the pit of my stomach. No, we shouldn't be tender with Nazis, I answer. Because with Nazis, there is no radically tender society for everyone. We have every reason to hate fascists, I tell her.

And we have to hate them.

A short few months later, I find myself writing this book. A book about hate. Maybe because I want to set things straight. Probably because I fear being remembered as a peace-loving hippie. Or because I am horrified by the thought of being forced to watch on helplessly, after my death, as quotes from my book are ripped from their context and posted all over Instagram under #loveistheanswer.

But that isn't the only reason for this book. I've also come to realise, through many conversations I've had and messages I've received, that writing politically about emotion can generate great potential for change. That such texts can pick people up from a place of innermost unease or discontent and mobilise them. As the Chilean feminist collective LASTESIS put it: 'Trabajar con las emociones es un regalo subversivo para el mundo', to work with emotions is a subversive gift to the world.[2]

But what is it that keeps these political feelings alive? What are they good for? Who do they benefit? The tenderness, the unease, the discontent? As an individual in a collective, as part of a movement? Which feelings weigh us down, and which feelings pick us up, again and again, and push us further on this path to a better and fairer society? How should these feelings manifest as actions – and vice versa?

Should they erupt violently, or slowly and stealthily take hold?

And what about hate? In the following pages and chapters, I will feel out the contours of its form and probe into its history. And I will contradict

myself, again and again. Because the past and present of hate is a past and present of simultaneity and contradiction.

It is paradoxical. In looks and gestures, in daily life and language, hate is ever-present. It blossoms in children's bedrooms and thrives in parliamentary speeches. It doesn't fall from the sky, nor does it grow in the shadows.

However, it is there that hate is supposed to have been exiled. Because, as ever-present as it is, on paper, hate isn't allowed to exist. We still applaud indignation at the injustices of the world – as long as it doesn't disrupt one's own sheltered life in mummy and daddy's inherited apartment. And anger is sometimes still okay too, as long as it comes with a wink, a touch of lifestyle feminism and, for God's sake, not too much aggression. But not this grinding, corrosive, lingering hate. No. Indignation runs out of words. Anger runs out of air. Hate remains.

But first, let's take a step back. What is hate actually made from? What is its essence? In the Duden German dictionary, it is described as 'a hostile aversion, strong feeling of objection and enmity'. But is it so simple in reality? Is hate really just a strong dislike, a mere feeling of resentment that manifests in grudges and complaints?

No, hate only hides behind these simple ideas.

My philosophy degree was a disappointment; I already wrote about that in my first book. The most revolutionary thing about it was the professor's jeans. And every opinion seemed maddeningly dogmatic. As I recall it, any expression of emotion, any interjection, any tone of voice that deviated from the motorised hums and hahs of the group was met with baffled looks, as if Hegel himself had risen from the dead and decided to relieve himself in front of the entire seminar.

I don't want to repeat myself – I'm boring myself already. I mean, it's not as if I learned absolutely nothing from the degree. I definitely learned something … you always learn something! Back then, I learned the Western philosophical art of defining and categorising. Species, genus, differentia. An art expertly devised by the ancient philosopher Aristotle; to observe the things of the world and the relationships between them, to compare them, separate and categorise them, to pack them up into understandable little packages and tie them with a bow. There'll be a taster of that in the first chapter.

In this process of categorising, I kept stumbling across old familiar templates on the basis of which all beings of the world are supposed to be explainable: binarities and dichotomies that I have already written about in *Radical Tenderness*. If something is not A, then it is B. If something is not B, then it is A; A being the positive, B being the negative. The binarities follow a hierarchy, and the things and qualities in the world must be separated from each other and broken down, again and again, until only their supposedly indivisible and irreducible ‘essence’ remains; and they finally escape the definition cycle.

However, these templates rarely take into account the external social, cultural and, above all, economic conditions that – in my opinion – produce the things and qualities of the world in the first place. Nor do they address the fact that these external conditions are not set in stone but constantly changing.

There is nothing in this world that simply exists for its own sake – on its own and detached from its surroundings. Just like love – as I wrote in *Radical Tenderness* – hate does not exist in a vacuum. And those who hate must navigate a vast ocean of possible reactions to the world.

So, I must admit, in the sticky, doughy mess of related emotions and actions – lumped in together with resentment and violence – hate isn’t so easy to pin down. It can’t be stamped out like a Christmas gingerbread biscuit. Because hate has no tangible essence. Because often, hate is both feeling and doing at the same time. Because people and processes in the world are complex.

Yet, here I am, biscuit cutter in hand, daring to take on the dough and at least try to mould hate into some recognisable form. Because, despite my aversion to the constant defining and categorising, distinctions and limitations can sometimes be very insightful. They can guide our writing, locate our unease and discontent, and help us to better understand the social makeup of our capitalist, patriarchal and colonial present. Especially regarding political feelings.

German philosopher Hilge Landweer makes a distinction between hate and contempt, for example. Where hate is directly related to an impulse to destroy, contempt is more likely accompanied by an impulse to turn away. An impulse that fits exceptionally well in the ‘neoliberal landscape’, Landweer adds.[3] Because at worst, this act of turning away in contempt harbours a feeling of indifference, which leads to the dehumanisation of the

other. Contempt, the scrunching up of the nose, the self-righteous indignation – these violent and hierarchical gestures of arrogance – all align with the pervasive sense of superiority among ruling individuals and classes, and their insistence on personal responsibility for their own success.

According to Landweer, contempt comes from a position of superiority – or rather, feelings of contempt establish one's own perception of moral superiority. Hate, on the other hand, comes from an inferior position and can unleash the potential for change. Thus, in an oppressive and hierarchical social system, where hate tends to emerge from below, contempt strikes from above.[4]

And yes, of course, there is also the arrogant, controlling hate, that strikes down through economies and systems of government. But, here, Landweer delivers exactly what I need to write this book – a biscuit cutter to finally give hate its shape: hate as a catalyst for change; hate as a transformative power. Of course, hate can be used to oppress, but above all, this book is about how it can be used to resist.

I want to write about real hate – not its allegedly ominous nature, or its wicked essence. I will write about reactionary hate and strategic hate, hate as a last resort, hate as a form of empowerment and hate as an art of resistance. I will provide no conclusive definitions. I will work the dough, stamp hate out into different shapes and then knead them in again. Because I am not writing about hate for the sake of a new definition, but in the interest of a new world. Thus, hate needs to become visible – its history and its present.

Because one thing is for sure: hate is supposed to be exiled, kept out of sight.

In our supposedly enlightened and civilised Western society, hate doesn't belong. It doesn't align with the Christian values that Western society is grounded in. It undermines the Western world's self-proclaimed saviourhood.

Yet there is still space in this story for the hate of those who suffer under this lie; for those who have been, and are still being, exploited and murdered because of it.

Their hate isn't allowed to exist, lest it threaten the self-proclaimed civilisation.

In German, they say 'Hass ist hässlich' – 'hate is ugly' (or literally, hate is hate-worthy). And, like ugliness, hate is so deplorable that it doesn't even

seem worthy of its own story. In comparison to the plethora of writing on love, my research into German philosophy yielded no popular intellectual history on hate, and no fixed set of philosophical or sociological masterpieces that would provide me with a theoretical foundation. Of course, that won't stop me from building my own in the first chapter. But, to do so, I will need to burrow deep into the history, read the tracks and trace the spoor.

At the same time, recognising the theoretical absence of hate is only half the truth. In the history of ideas, hate does not receive the same attention as love and its related themes – whether in philosophy or politics – but it does always play a role. Even if it is understated, subliminal. Even if it only appears as a feature of that which Western moral civilisation does *not* want to be. Sometimes the absence of ideas tells us more about their presence and makes their presence even more salient.

And yet, another one of hate's simultaneities and contradictions must be addressed: in recent years, many things have been said and written about hate. Alarming things. It has dominated headlines. But at that point it was about the hate being spread by racists and fascists in Germany, Europe and beyond the continent. Then, the supposedly 'critical' analysis lost itself in empty phrases and clichés. Less hate, more love, they said, while European nations continued to roll out their policies of war. Hate is strong, love is stronger, hate is loud, love is louder. To me, those are nothing more than empty words.

In this book, right-wing hate has only a minor role. Despite my best efforts it continues to drift into my field of view. But this type of hate is ultimately not my benchmark. Neither its agents nor their personal motivations interest me. What interests me in this book are those people who, not only in recent years but as far back as history goes, have appeared as objects and targets of hate. Who are the invisible simultaneity of hate: radicals, Blacks, racialised peoples, Jews, poor people and the working class, females and other marginalised genders. Revolutionaries. People engaged in class conflicts and struggles for independence.

It is these people who interest me, as agents of hate in a capitalist, racist and patriarchal world. Their hate doesn't always have to be justified, or good. But it does exist. I am interested in those people who had to hate. Those who were accused of hating. Those who were denied the ability to

hate. And, above all, those who hated. Who still hate. People who not only endure hate but who choose it.

There is one final simultaneity in store. I have said that hate is widely frowned upon, and is marked by a conspicuous conceptual absence. And while this is true, sometimes hate crops up awkwardly and gets in the way. Sometimes, hate is invoked to explain phenomena that it is not capable of explaining, at least not alone. An example I am repeatedly confronted with in my work, is misogyny – the systematic oppression, annihilation, punishment and surveillance of the bodies of women and other genders classified as female or inferior, according to the dominant patriarchal standards adhered to by the majority of society and its institutions. This is accompanied by the systematic disparagement, ridicule, dismissal and belittling of all qualities, occupations and forms of work characterised as *feminine*.

Misogyny is often translated into German as '*Frauenhass*' or 'hatred of women' – but this label only distorts the issue. Firstly, misogyny doesn't only affect women, but a diverse range of feminine and queer genders. Secondly, labelling it as 'hatred' gives people the impression that misogyny is a question of emotion. A matter of hate-filled relationships between individuals, concerning certain people with certain evil attitudes that should be simply unlearned and forgotten. However, those affected by misogyny must not necessarily be 'hated' in the common sense of the word – they can be desired lovers and friends – but, still, that isn't enough to protect them from being murdered by their partners. So, to describe misogyny only as a form of hate, can, at worst, lead to the relativisation and depoliticisation of this oppressive system, and, in turn, strengthen it.

It is the interwoven nature of the concepts of hate and domination that interests me in this book. How do they relate to each other? Where do they entail one another, and where is hate a disruptor? Domination is not always a direct social relationship expressed through orders, obedience and punishment. Dynamics of domination also proliferate through a system and its network of structures, indirect expectations, rules and regulations, mechanisms and divisions of labour. The way that this apparatus exerts control over bodies, space and time often goes undetected.

So – I've already hinted at it – in this book, I will write about the economies of hate, hate as a form of government and as a system of domination. But I will also write about hate as a counter-violent reaction to

oppression, a form of self-defence and a necessary tool of justice. Hate interests me, if nowhere else, there where it is more than just a knee-jerk reaction. There, where it transforms into a productive force. I am interested in a hate that attacks that which alienates and degrades people. A hate that yields tenderness.

Just like love, as I have written before, hate is an action. There is no hate without haters, and no haters without the hating bodies that shift and stir and band together against internal and external resistances. And who sometimes are undone by their own hate.

The haters take centre stage in the final chapter of this book. In my head, I have given them the spotlight, listened to their grievances and their whispers; I have felt their hate and their resistance. I have burrowed deep into their memories, fears and dreams, and searched for them in history books, archives, novels and films. I have tried to weave a thread through their stories, to be able to compare, separate and combine them, beyond their historical settings, simultaneities and geographical borders.

But, dear readers, before I raise the curtain and reveal the stage, I must first invite you on a journey into history. Because, as I said, hate is a tool of domination. And that inevitably leads to the question: which type of hate and whose hate prevails and dominates? Where does our knowledge of hate come from, and how does it influence our reality? This is where the quest must begin.

Hate

He hates waiting.
He asks death if it could wait for some time until he finishes
writing his new poem.
He looks at himself in the mirror and puts
a fresh rose in his lapel for the coming long journey.

Mosab Abu Toha, 'To Mahmoud Darwish'[1]

Hate defies linear explanation. There are no arrows to show the way, no trails marked out, no timelines to follow. Because the history of hate cannot be told without simultaneities and contradictions, turbulence and complications.

However, there is one trace of the past that I want to pursue – one that winds its way through ideas and realities, where questions of emotion, ownership and domination inevitably intersect. And it begins there, where every boring and ostensibly proper philosophy degree in Germany begins, in antiquity, with Aristotle.

Aristotle deals extensively with emotions in his texts – with hate, but above all, with anger. In *The Art of Rhetoric*, he analyses these emotions with a particular purpose: he asks himself, which emotions should be activated and employed to persuade others, or, for example, a judge. He classifies useful feelings and ideals as virtues (justice, courage, temperance, magnanimity or gentleness), while feelings of fear and anger are classed as affects or passions.[2]

'Let anger, then, be defined as a desire, accompanied by pain, for [an apparent] revenge, due to an apparent slight affecting a man himself or one of his friends, by persons who ought not to slight him', Aristotle writes.[3] A person angers because he is denied something, Aristotle continues, like the thirsty when denied something to drink. Thus, anger concerns first and

foremost those in pain: ‘the sick, the necessitous, the lovesick, the thirsty, in a word, all who desire something and cannot obtain it, are prone to anger and easily excited, especially against those who make light of their present condition’.[4]

Anger is born from that which affects us personally; enmity, on the other hand, does not necessitate this personal aspect. Thus, Aristotle defines hate as a form of enmity. While anger is directed towards individuals – towards specific persons who have wronged us – hate is directed at ‘classes’. As an example of a class supposedly hated by all, Aristotle cites thieves. (Whether thieves must also hate themselves is left open to interpretation; however, I doubt that thieves were the intended recipients of his philosophy.)

Time cures anger; hate is incurable. Anger is the desire to inflict pain; hate is the desire to inflict damage.

These reflections in Aristotle’s writing became the pillars along which the majority of Western thinkers and theologians culturally delineated hate in the following centuries: hate is harmful – that is the core of its nature. It harms people and the community.

According to Aristotle, emotions can be organised in a conclusive hierarchy of expediency and value. People strive for the ideals of truth and a good life, and the virtues help them along this route, unlike the affects – such as anger or hate – which only interfere and should therefore be regulated by logic and reason.

As I have pointed out, the Aristotelian philosophy of emotion primarily finds mention in *The Art of Rhetoric* – a work on the art of speech and persuasion with particular application to court settings. It is in this context that his hierarchy of emotions is to be understood. Because, in conflict situations or the court, expressing base affects such as anger might provoke the judge. Might provoke those in power.

The established system of order does not want passionate revolt; it punishes individuals who fight back. If anything, it requires individuals to navigate the system skilfully, and to avoid protest at all costs. That is why anger and hate are not virtues, but dangerous affects. For they disturb the peace.

And thus – as they so often are in Western philosophy – logic and reason are employed to regulate the negative emotions of anger and hate, and to maintain the peace. It is, however, well known that Aristotle did not consider all persons to be endowed with reason. Instead, his philosophy is

reserved for the particular class of person he considers blessed with this ability: the free property-owning man (essentially, he who fears thieves).

Thus, even in antiquity, verdicts about hate and those who hate were inextricably bound to dynamics of power and rule. A beautiful example of this comes from the time of early Christianity, in the New Testament of the Christian Bible. In a text commonly called the Epistle to the Romans – from the middle of the first century, after the crucifixion of Jesus – the apostle Paul writes to the new Roman parish, which at the time consisted mostly of so-called Jewish Christians, essentially Jews who believed in Jesus as the Messiah. At this time in the Roman Empire, they were a persecuted and oppressed minority, often shunned even by their former synagogue communities.

In the Epistle, Paul emphasises the Christian message of salvation and appeals to the persecuted:

> Don’t let evil conquer you but conquer evil by doing good. Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished … give respect and honor to those who are in authority. Owe nothing to anyone – except for your obligation to love one another … Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don’t participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and jealousy [hate and envy]. Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.[5]

Conquer evil with good. Love not hate. Paul reframes the question of survival and how to respond to repression as a mere question of morals and adherence to a God-fearing lifestyle. In this transmission, the Epistle to the Romans not only depoliticises and individualises the Jewish Christian response to oppression, but also establishes a solid foundation upon which the Christian Church and other state institutions can justify their domination, violence and demand for submission to authority over the following centuries.

The Epistle to the Romans is an exemplar in the way it condemns hate as a rogue element of resistance that goes against the divine order of God and the world. This is a message intended not only for believers but also everyone else. For the faithful, it demands submission and docility – even in the face of the injustices in broader society and within their own ranks. The message to the outside world is: we are a religion of peace. A claim that Christianity and Islam have both made use of to invade and forcibly colonise much of the globe as self-proclaimed ‘bringers of salvation and peace’.

The discipline of bodies remains an integral tool of control in prominent Christian schools of thought. Wrath is declared one of the seven deadly sins. In the fourth and fifth centuries, Roman Christian thinkers like Augustine insisted that even the negative affects are an unavoidable part of human nature. ‘At the same time, however, he upholds the ideal of an existence not driven by passions’, philosophers Hilge Landweer and Ursula Renz observe, for ‘this has its place in heaven or the afterlife’.[6]

However, beginning in the eighteenth century, emotions, even the negative ones, did come into fashion – at least in selected circles of philosophers and thinkers. It was their way of separating themselves from the dominant philosophy of the Enlightenment, which celebrated rationality and reason. By contrast, they chose to celebrate feelings. It was the era of Romanticism – an era of introspection – where human internal processes were to serve as the true moral gauge of right and wrong.

In 1826, the famous British writer William Hazlitt even published the small book *On the Pleasure of Hating*, in which he, in various essays, addresses the pleasure and moral value of hate as a part of human nature.

There is no better word to describe this book than ‘cringeworthy’. In it, Hazlitt philosophises about his heroism after deciding not to kill a spider, despite hating the utter sight of it. He does not hesitate to add that in his position, a child, a woman, a clown or a moralist would have crushed the little creature to death – and yes, that is the order in which he listed them.[7] As one reads on, it becomes more or less clear that Hazlitt feels aggrieved – his contemporaries no longer want to hang out with him. As a consequence, the world gains another work of literature, in which an offended white man bathes his wounded ego in wilfully philosophical effusions.

The fact that William Hazlitt was a bourgeois white man in the colonial kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, is more than just a footnote. Only

with this information can we make sense of the fact that, in an age when emotionality was philosophically and scientifically deplored as a symptom of irrationality, a writer would dedicate his literary efforts to the pleasure of such a negative emotion. To hate. But William Hazlitt had nothing to fear. The fact that he was a feeling and hating being – and recognised himself as such – could not change the general assumption that he was *human*.

This observation may sound trite. But in this time of colonial endeavours, Western colonisers systematically developed theories declaring indigenous peoples to be inferior races – races that could supposedly only be brought to reason by brute force – to justify their violence against indigenous bodies and regions. Western colonisers identify the colonised – both in their science, as well as their philosophy – as those persons and peoples who lack the capacity for reason. The capacity to invent or innovate. The capacity for culture. The capacity to act rationally. As a consequence, they condemn them to be moulded and controlled by others.

The separation of those who are able to act rationally, from those unable to do so, is central to colonialism. And, in the following pages, I want to explore and unravel this false logic, along the lines of different forms of hate that I call modes. Because, for me, the question of ability and impotence inevitably gives rise to another question: who has the power to hate?

Where do power and powerlessness weave together? Where can we find hate in this patchwork? How can I sew it into a new dress? Who holds the fabric and thread of hate in their hands, stitches and darns it, and wraps the cloth of hate around the necks of those deemed powerless?

As early as the seventeenth century, philosophers like Thomas Hobbes began to propagate crudely racist theories, and theories that declared humans to be inherently hostile, with the nature of beasts. The German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel in his work *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) professed hate to be a natural characteristic trait of Black African people. He wrote: they are examples of ‘thinned-out and unsociable spirits of different peoples, who, in their hatred, battle with each other to the death’.[8]

Because colonised Black people are fundamentally hateful, overcome by ancient hatred and trapped in endless inner battles, they are, in this sense, incapable of civilisation. Incapable of any form of society in which a common culture is created peacefully through the mutual recognition of

civil rights. This racist notion circulated among the majority of Western thinkers in the nineteenth century, and the alleged cannibalistic rituals of indigenous peoples, served as proof of its validity.

The essence was this: the hate of colonised, racialised people is so self-sabotaging and destructive that they are neither able to create nor sustain life. ‘And if it is strength, it can be only the brute strength of the body, excessive, convulsive, spasmodic, and resisting thought: a wave, rage, nervousness all at once, whose domain is to incite disgust, fear, and dread’, Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe writes of the white colonial view.[9] According to this, the colonised are not capable of compassion, nor of understanding nuance. They are not able to participate in society following the enlightened model.

In this way, the different textures of hate, which are to make up the identity of the racialised individual, knit together. Each one of these textures has its own mechanism of action; each of these textures is its own mode. I can distinguish five modes in total:

Firstly, the hate that is attributed to racialised and oppressed people, and alleged to be inherent to their nature, in order to dehumanise and subjugate.

Secondly, the hate that colonisers systematically sow among the colonised. By creating division, fostering rivalries and instigating hatred among plantation workers, for example. In this way, they ensure that the exploited and enslaved monitor and discipline each other as they work. This policy of hate also serves to dehumanise.[10] The bodies working on the plantations need not be human – it is enough for them to be hateful masses, as long as their labour can continue to be exploited.

French and British colonial rulers employed similar policies of hate for the purpose of controlling peoples, classes and tribal groups in Western Asia as in Northern Africa, especially Algeria, where colonisers used laws, rumours and other manipulative practices to set Jewish and Muslim citizens against each other and initiate tribal feuds.

These policies – or rather, economies – of hate make up an essential anchor point in many leftist critiques of the system. Wealthy property-owning classes need politically manufactured hate to divide the exploited. The shift workers against the foreman. The local wage workers against the foreign wage workers. The wage workers against the unemployed. The market thrives on constant competition and muted hostility between wage-dependent people.

The third strand, the third mode of hate – and this one is just as potent as the others – is political self-hate. The hate of oppressed, colonised, enslaved or racialised people, directed inwards. This mode attracted the attention of the philosopher, psychiatrist and revolutionary in the field of decolonisation, Frantz Fanon.

The Black person discovers themself as 'an object in the midst of other objects' in a white world, he explains in *Black Skin, White Masks*.[11] They experience themself as a supposedly bad, evil and ugly object of attraction, fear and disgust. Their inner conflict therefore stems from adopting this view of themself, hating themself as Black, recognising the reputed superiority of the whites while simultaneously being forced to acknowledge that they themself cannot be, can never be, white.

Even today, in a neoliberal, racist and patriarchal society, self-hate makes us submissive, powerless and voiceless. It isolates us, and it is profitable. It sells us products that guarantee our continued performance, and rules that are used to determine our own worth: at work, at school and in our relationships. In its extreme form, self-hate is but the long arm of oppression. The oppressors no longer need to discipline and degrade the victims themselves, for the internalised oppression that takes root in their minds and bodies does this on its own. Entrenched self-hate guarantees that hate knows only one direction – inwards – and never threatens the external forces of oppression.

Thus, this mode is closely related to the fourth mode of hate: the prohibition of hate. Where, for different reasons, one is forced to stifle one's hate, loathing and will to resist.

Oppression does not only function via direct violence – through rules, beatings and punishments – but also via the construction of images and conditions which reinforce the complete powerlessness and immobility of its victims. It is through these constructions, these allegations of passivity and apathy, that oppressive forces claim legitimacy: *See, they don't even fight back. See, they lack even the most fundamental human capacity: the capacity to resist.*

'When it was I who had every reason to hate, to despise, I was rejected? When I should have been begged, implored, I was denied the slightest recognition?' Fanon writes. 'I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the "idea" that others have of me but of my own appearance.'[12] He does not even have the right to scream his hate

in the face of the white man. He has only the duty to whisper gratitude in his ears.[13]

This inability to resist as a feature of inhumanity also appears in widespread antisemitic narratives in Europe, where Jews are cast as passive victims who protested neither against centuries of persecution nor the systematic mass murder of their people during the Holocaust. Today, we see the manifestation of this myth in the erasure of Jewish antifascist resistance. Yet, there was always resistance. Just as there was always hate and vengeance from the survivors. But I will get to that later.

On the one hand, this prohibition of hate or inability to hate can be understood as an expression of the surrender and non-resistant acceptance of oppressive conditions that are required of the oppressed.[14] At the same time, this obligation to surrender does not always have to be voiced. Sometimes, it becomes a self-commitment.

In her work *Self-Defense: A Philosophy of Violence*, philosopher Elsa Dorlin describes this phenomenon as ‘dirty care’ or ‘negative care’. The term *care* indicates a form of self-preservation or welfare. Female persons, for example, are assumed to have a caring, gentle and often motherly nature, which, as if by magic, impels them to sacrifice themselves for others, understate their own needs and tolerate injustices perpetrated against them.

In her book *Süß* (*Sweet*), Ann-Kristin Tlusty takes on the figure of the *gentle* woman. Piece by piece, she lays out the uses of apparent feminine gentleness in a patriarchal capitalist society and outlines how the notion of feminine gentleness became established as a bourgeois ideal in the twentieth century. It was denied the working-class women who worked in the factories with their husbands and were stigmatised as overly masculine. With increased prosperity, more women became housewives and their husbands the primary breadwinners, and, as a consequence, the ideal of feminine gentleness became a generally accepted part of the culture.[15]

‘Gentleness is considered a skill, indeed an indispensable skill for a female existence – yet, at the same time, it is devalued’, Tlusty observes.[16] The fact that care work in the home, largely performed by women, is not remunerated or even recognised as real work attests to this. As if this ‘indispensable skill’ is bestowed upon women with the flick of a magic wand, and the propensity to undertake care work along with it. Yet, society

has been assigning this work to women for centuries. After all, feminised care – washing, cooking, tidying, child-rearing and other forms of emotional care – is essential for the continued functioning of our social and economic systems. It both creates and restores the most important resource available in the capitalist market: labour. The ruthless exploitation of care reveals itself in other areas too: in the female-dominated public sector, nurses and caregivers work in precarious conditions. Their precarity is the very provision that keeps a fumbling healthcare system from complete collapse.

Gentleness is thus conjured up as a natural, essential and economically profitable attribute of femininity. But, even here, distinctions must be made. As firmly established as this ideal is, gentleness is an attribute designated first and foremost to the white, cis-hetero, bourgeois woman. On one hand, marginalised genders, queer or racialised women are required to conform to this often self-destructive ideal of absolute gentleness. On the other hand, the hegemonic powers of society can and will exclude them from fulfilling this norm – declaring each and every fibre of their bodies a hollow core of hate.

I am reminded of one of the (countless) true crime shows I have watched over the past years: *Murder by the Coast*. In 1999, in Andalusia's Mijas, the nineteen-year-old Rocío Wanninkhof Hornos was murdered. Two years later, the fifty-two-year-old María Dolores Vázquez was put on trial for her murder. As the former partner of Rocío's mother, Dolores was like a foster mother to Rocío. And for her involvement in the murder, they found not a sliver of proof. Yet, the authorities and the public set out to confirm her guilt at any cost. And, by painting a misogynistic portrait of her – as a supposedly volatile, vindictive, domineering and masculine woman – they succeeded.

Her homosexuality, her gaze, her short hair, her gestures – even just her existence as a lesbian – became the subject matter of intrusive media news reports and even court proceedings. The homophobic populace hunted Dolores Vázquez like a dog. She was convicted and sentenced to fifteen years in prison. Meanwhile, the real murderer, a thirty-two-year-old British man with an extensive record of sexual offences, killed again. He was not caught until 2003. To this day, Dolores Vázquez has received neither compensation nor a public apology for her wrongful conviction.

In a reality that knows only two genders, the face of hate must be masculine (as the face of gentleness is already feminine). It is also the masculine principle that has been historically linked to war, military, statehood, violence, power and dominance. Even in Latin, the word *malus* can be translated both as *masculine* and *wicked*.

Thus, femininities that are not cis, not heterosexual, not white, are put under constant pressure to demonstrate their gentleness, and therefore their validity. In order to be accepted as human, they must first prove they are not hateful, not angry, not destructive and not dominant – fundamentally, not masculine.

Yet, in the ancient and enlightened philosophies that I have mentioned, it is the masculine principle that embodies rationality and reason. The opposite of destruction. Masculine hate presents itself dressed in expedience, legitimacy, statehood and authority. It renounces its hatefulness and ugliness and becomes an instrument of reason.

It is exactly this contradiction and simultaneity that is inherent to many phenomena in a complex world. However, under exploitative, patriarchal and racist conditions, they can be interpreted and adapted at will, in order to justify dominant structures of power, dominant conceptions of gender, and dominant laws or police practices.

The bodies of the dominated, queer and racialised persons, their uncomfortable stares and their resistant voices, can and must represent pure horror.

Thus, for marginalised and oppressed people in a society where they are constantly confronted with racist or sexist violence, presenting themselves as gentle or caring can be a survival strategy. ‘Enduring violence generates a negative cognitive and emotional attitude that determines the individuals who experience it as always on the lookout, paying close attention to the world and to others. They live in a state of “radical anxiety”, and it is exhausting to have to deny, minimize, defuse, endure, reduce, and avoid violence, to have to seek shelter, protect yourself, defend yourself’, Dorlin writes. ‘“Concern for others” here has nothing to do with doing something to help, care for, comfort, reassure or protect them; rather, we are concerned for others in order to anticipate what they want, will, or can do to us – which might devalue, exhaust, insult, isolate, injure, worry, deny, frighten, or de-realize us.’[17]

This is the very definition of *dirty care*: forced acts of care carried out under the constant threat of violence and in fear of punishment. And it is here that the ideas of Aristotle come full circle. In *The Art of Rhetoric*, the ancient philosopher dedicated himself not only to the emotions of anger and enmity but also their antidote: mildness. He describes 'becoming mild' as a talent that quiets and appeases anger. But to what end? 'Evidence of this may be seen in the punishment of slaves', according to Aristotle, 'for we punish more severely those who contradict us and deny their offence, but cease to be angry with those who admit that they are justly punished.'[18] Thus docility becomes a virtue for the oppressor, and the art of becoming mild becomes a survival strategy for the oppressed.

The fourth mode, the prohibition of hate, is also directly linked to the first mode, which categorises marginalised people as fundamentally hateful. Those presumed to be hateful from their very nature, and thus labelled evil and inhuman, must avoid validating this assumption at all costs. Because to confirm their alleged inhumanity – even unintentionally – is to risk even more violence, brutality and suffering.

When the Westdeutscher Rundfunk, one of Germany's public broadcast channels, announced the appointment of journalist and doctor Nemi El-Hassan as the new presenter of a science programme in the autumn of 2021, the stage was set for a public witch-hunt. This time, the drive to destroy Nemi El-Hassan was not motivated by her sexual orientation, as in the case of María Dolores Vázquez. Instead, it was guided by a specific type of racism: Nemi El-Hassan is a Palestinian Muslim.

In a media campaign orchestrated by right-wing groups and propagated by Springer Publishing,[19] an internationally active and reactionary media company, Nemi El-Hassan was alleged to be an Islamist and antisemite. To substantiate these claims, recordings were brought forth from El-Hassan's participation in the annual pro-Palestinian Quds Day demonstration held in Berlin, where, indeed, antisemitic slogans were chanted. In 2014, the Quds Day demonstration took place in the shadow of the Gaza war and the subsequent deaths of around 2,000 Palestinians, according to UN statistics.[20] That Nemi El-Hassan had also liked Instagram posts from the left-wing Jewish organisation Jewish Voice for Peace discussing Israel's occupation policy was supposed to corroborate the claims of antisemitism. El-Hassan's attempts to distance herself from her participation in this rally –

to explain that her attendance was not motivated by antisemitism, but by her opposition to the war in the Gaza Strip – were futile.

Nor did it make a difference to the broadcast channel, who rescinded her contract – while racist and antisemitic punchlines continue to be an integral part of each and every successful primetime show on German television.

Even Nemi El-Hassan's efforts to distance herself from past actions, her apologies and her right to personal political evolution – supposedly fundamental rights in a liberal society – were rejected. Because, for the majority of the German public – regardless of whether they were right-wing, conservative or liberal – as a Palestinian, Nemi El-Hassan is the personification of terrorism and hate.

This anti-Palestinian racism is but a well-known tactical smokescreen: descendants of National Socialist perpetrators, wishing to exonerate themselves from any suspicions of antisemitism, shift the focus to a supposedly threatening external force, so they can make a show of opposing it all the more self-righteously. For many internet trolls, Nemi El-Hassan wore the guilty verdict in her very name. According to the feeble, racist comments, a person with the name 'Hassan' (almost identical to the German verb 'to hate') can be nothing other than hateful.

The knot formed between these two modes – the attribution of supposedly animalistic hatred, which in turn demands to be refuted at all costs – is tight, elastic, and at first glance, impenetrable. Yet sometimes, the media exposes it in all its ugliness – in a live stream, as it were – and not just in the case of Nemi El-Hassan.

This phenomenon finds an exceptionally brutal form of expression when it comes to racist police violence. For example, the racist practice of racial profiling, that is, the targeting of persons for inspections or checks on the basis of racialised features of their appearance, regardless of whether or not they are suspected of wrongdoing. And, although more and more cases like these are being filmed and shared on social media, the logic and reasoning behind this practice remain largely uncontested by the majority of society.

According to this logic and reasoning, some people are – simply by virtue of their appearance and existence – a source of danger to the general public, and should thus be subject to strict surveillance, especially in public spaces. However, when they defend themselves against these racist police practices – when they, for example, refuse inspection or raise their voice – they seem to confirm the very allegation made against them. They become

the aggressor. Even if they do not resist, they are still deemed invulnerable seeds of aggression.

This phenomenon is nothing new. In Los Angeles, California, in 1991, African American Rodney King found himself intoxicated in a police traffic control. The four officers present at his arrest beat and tortured King for several long minutes. A bystander filmed the scenes from his balcony, capturing the officers' vicious attack. They continued to hit and kick Rodney King's already unconscious body as it lay on the ground. In court, King's attempts at self-defence were interpreted as signalling aggression and intent to attack; while the real offenders, the police officers, were all acquitted.

'Like any African American man arrested by a racist police force, Rodney King is recognized as an agent, but only as an agent of violence, as a violent subject, to the exclusion of any other sort of action', Dorlin explains. 'Black men are always made responsible for this sort of violence: they are its cause and effect, its beginning and its end.'[21]

The more Rodney King defended himself, the more indefensible he became.[22]

When it comes to racist police violence, the German public is quite happy to point fingers at the US. Yet, here at home, racialised violence has a long history – from German colonialism to German fascism, all the way to the present. Civil society groups such as Death in Custody and KOP (Campaign for Victims of Racial Police Violence) bring this reality to light and seek criminal convictions. They have been meticulously documenting cases and victims of police violence in the Federal Republic of Germany since 1989.

Since then, German police officers have shot and killed more than 300 people, many of whom were affected by mental illness or an unstable mental state at the time.[23] In 86 per cent of cases of suspected unlawful police violence, no criminal proceedings are initiated, and if they are, only 2 per cent of them end up in court.[24] More than 180 people have died in police custody since 1990.[25]

The circumstances that led to these deaths often go unexplained and unpunished. One of the most notorious cases is that of Oury Jalloh, who moved to Germany after fleeing Sierra Leone. In 2005, in his police cell in Dessau, German police officers set him alight and he burned to death, as numerous expert reports prove. To this day, the findings of these reports

have failed to bring about any legal or political consequences. There was a similar case in 2018, when a Kurdish asylum seeker from Syria, Amed Ahmad, burned to death in the JVA Kleve state prison. He had been wrongfully imprisoned there, apparently due to a case of mistaken identity. Today, his parents and other activists are still fighting for an investigation into his death and seeking consequences for those involved.

Here, in Germany, most of society continues to question whether victims of police brutality are truly victims, especially when it comes to racialised persons. In 2020, eight police officers arrested a fifteen-year-old schoolkid, Kadir H., in Hamburg. A bystander captured the events on film and, in this case, she even tried to intervene – pleading with the officers to remain calm. But the officers overpowered young Kadir, who was already pushed up against the wall, and dragged him to the ground. Kadir gasped, 'I can't breathe' – the same words that are spray-painted across the wall behind him. These events took place only a few weeks after George Floyd's murder by asphyxiation at the hands of a white police officer in the US.

And, despite the unusually strong interest of the German public in racist police violence at this time – in the midst of the Black Lives Matter movement – Kadir H. and his father were forced to plead their case in numerous interviews and repeatedly forced to assert their victimhood. In *Bild*, a popular German tabloid newspaper, Kadir was referred to as a 'boxer' – with the undeniably racist undertone: this tall boy with Turkish roots is fundamentally aggressive, fundamentally threatening. He could never be a victim.

And so, the question arises: who, by societal definition, is indefensible, unprotectable? And who then is allowed to defend themselves? Who can rely on social prejudice to legitimise their violence?

The cases of Rodney King, Kadir H. and countless others reveal that the right to self-defence is the preserve of ruling individuals and institutions. And despite being cast in laws and norms, the right to exercise hate and its accompanying violence is likewise reserved for those whose violence has always been oppressive and destructive. Who throughout history have used it to suppress racialised people, queer people, exploited people and other marginalised groups.

Even hate and violence are regulated within the economy of power.

But still, I ask myself – and this is the question that drives me forward in the second part of this book – is there a way out of this vicious cycle, this

vicious economy, that appears to encompass everything and everyone? How can we cut the rope tied around our necks, and how can we set this rope alight, such that a trail of fire leads back to those who tied it?

What does hate look like when we take control of it, unravel it and weave it anew?

I promised five modes of hate. I have already introduced four: the hate ascribed to the oppressed as an inherent quality, the hate systematically sowed by the oppressor, self-hate, and the hate that is prohibited and that through gentleness and concern for one's own survival has to be defused. I still owe you one mode. And it is the hate that I have just mentioned: the fifth mode is hate as a self-empowered response to oppression.

I know that a resistant and conscious understanding of hate must assert itself. Because the conceptions of hate found in the stories of Catholicism, in the stories of the Enlightenment, in the stories of colonialism, and even in modern bourgeois stories, are still being preached today: hate as the ultimate taboo, hate as the absolute destructive force.

'Hate is fuzzy. It is difficult to hate with precision … Those who answer hate with hate have already allowed it to deform them, already come closer to what the haters want them to be.'[26] Journalist Carolin Emcke writes this in her book *Against Hate*, one of the most popular German-language essays of recent years. In 2016, it was awarded the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade. The text is a plea for a pluralistic society, in which Emcke analyses and denounces the populist and right-wing hatred, propagated by German groups like Pegida (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West).

Against Hate was released at a pivotal moment – a moment when in the face of right-wing violence, a large part of the German public chose to remain silent, and yet another large part quietly murmured their support. However, a rejection of hate and those who hate, as *Other*, pervades Emcke's book. The idea that people who are affected by racism can be anything other than objects of hate, let alone express hate themselves, appears unfathomable to her. And even if it was fathomable, it would not be acceptable – as Emcke reiterates through biblical-sounding warnings. Hate is fuzzy, she claims. But then how clear, and how precise, are descriptions of hate that ignore its heterogeneity? That deny that hate is just as complex as the people who do it? And that it can be both legitimately motivated and strategically targeted?

In January 2022, I attended an evangelical church service in Berlin. It was a service to mark the Memorial Day for the Victims of National Socialism. The pastor and the organisers of the event made the effort not only to silently remember the victims but also to tell stories of resistance. For example, we heard about Vitka Kempner, who blew up a German military train with dynamite, and after the war co-founded the radical group Nakam, which sought revenge for the crimes of the Holocaust. We also heard about the poet Hirsh Glick, who dedicated the partisan song 'Shtil, di nakht iz oysgeshternt' to Vitka Kempner, in which he praises both her and her firearm. Glick himself was killed in a struggle with German soldiers. Yet, at the end of the church service, it all happens just as you would expect. The pastor not only prays to the lord for peace; she also condemns all forms of hate and violence. And, at that point, I want nothing more than to jump up from my seat and start yelling: *ulan*, do you not hear yourselves speak? I would like to assume that the primary targets of this warning against violence are not the survivors of the Holocaust – that this condemnation is not primarily aimed at Vitka Kempner, her hate, revenge or retaliation. But I can only assume. Because the pastor does not bother to specify exactly which hate and which violence is to be banned from this Earth. The call of God is universal. And thus, we have our result. Hate is mispresented when discussions of violence or hate become lost in vague Sunday sermons, when these discussions are caught up in the perspective of perpetrators and when the hate of perpetrators is ultimately taken as the benchmark. Only then does hate become fuzzy.

Because, when it comes to hate, these key questions must be asked: who hates? Why do they hate? And where are they placed within the system of power and domination?

'It is hopeless to fight rigorism with rigorism, fanaticism with fanaticism, to confront the haters with hatred', Emcke continues in her essay. 'The enemies of democracy can be fought only by democratic means, with the rule of law.'[27] Here the horseshoe theory of hate comes to a head: hate is equally terrible, no matter which side it comes from.

Emcke presupposes in her essay that right-wing violence – which she says we must counter via democratic means – always stands in clear opposition to the rule of law. Therefore, we must defend the rule of law all the more fiercely, and have faith in its systems and processes.

But is right-wing aggression really always directed towards democracy and the rule of law? Are not its targets more often the very people who are neglected by it? Is it really true that every right-wing attack on a refugee centre is an attack on the legal state, when, in fact, it is the institutions of this state that have penned them in there in the first place? When, by carrying out deportations, those same institutions realise exactly what the right-wing perpetrators want: the categorisation of people according to their exploitability for the nation, and the disruption and destruction of the lives thereby deemed worthless.

What can a state under the rule of law do against this grave injustice? And beyond that, should the rule of law be treated as synonymous with justice?

The horseshoe argument clouds the fact that hate can be a response to the despotism of liberal democracies, especially when it comes from people suffering under right-wing, racist violence. It can be a response to the injustices that take place in the name of a legal state. Do we want to rely on a system where racist violence is neither accidental nor exceptional, but an inherent part of the system itself – implemented through exclusive principles of nation and belonging, deportations and deadly border regimes?

For the many people affected by racism in Germany – after years of right-wing terror attacks, deportations, exploitation and isolation in unstable neighbourhoods – the hope for a solution through democratic means has long since disappeared.

We have run out of patience.

I do not want to make empty promises to the people who I worry for, every day of my life. I know that this legal state does not exist to protect the worn-out, exploited body of my mother. And she knows it too. It is this state that has made her work her fingers to the bone for German wealth and prosperity. And it is this state that has made sure her pension will not be enough to live on. This state offers us neither time nor space to heal, to turn to one another without fear of consequence. The democratic and legal means of this state cannot offer us a radically tender society, in which we can meet one another with integrity and warmth.

We have run out of patience.

And, at the same time, patience is still needed – a type of patience not fuelled by restraint, but by persistence and grit. While the forms and mechanisms of oppression are tough and unyielding, and the battle against

them gruelling, the promise of a radically tender society remains a goal that we must continue to move towards, step by step – and one that is sometimes already being realised, in intermediate spaces. It is a countervailing force against the status quo.

Hate can guide us on this path – it can prevent us from turning back, from retreating into indifference and from allowing ourselves (and the world) to be swallowed up completely.

There are two of Emcke's observations that I do agree with. Those who answer hate with hate have already allowed it to deform them. That is true. People who suffer exploitation, racism or queerphobia – provided that we want to call these systems of oppression 'hate' – are inevitably moulded and changed by it. Because this type of hate condemns, violates and destroys their bodies and their spaces. Thus, hating these conditions of oppression can be an existential reaction. And, according to Emcke, to hate is to be unable to ignore, unable to forget. To hate, one must take the enemy seriously and consider it powerful and dangerous. One must fixate on it.

The fixation is crucial.

Because, in neoliberal societies, people are cursed to live in a constant state of competition, in which everything that they do and say is assigned a market value and traded off against others. This produces resentment and, in turn, its own form of hate. But, ultimately, it produces something I consider ever more dangerous: indifference. And contempt. In neoliberal societies, everything seems replaceable. And the deep-rooted belief that the current economic and political processes can never and will never change looms over all.

But, with fixation, hate can nag at this indifference. Although I do acknowledge that hate alone is not nearly enough to create a new world, it can, in its sheer doggedness, urge us to persevere, to push on in our mission to extinguish that which dominates us as human beings and makes us alien to one another: racism and patriarchy in this harsh capitalist world.

Hate can be a corrective measure. It fixates, and it waits expectantly.

Those who still look to the future, who continue to object to injustice, have not yet given up. Those who hate, have not yet given up. Hate can be a promise not to silence the rumblings of unease and discontent in exchange for a false sense of peace. Because in this ugly, hateful world, there can be no peaceful silence.

And, if it is all true, everything they have said about hate for hundreds of years – for example, that it is the absolute destructive force – are there not unfair structures and conditions in this world to be destroyed?

In the next chapter of this book, I do not endorse the absurd idea of returning to hate's supposed nature, especially with respect to its colonial history. It is not a matter of liberating ourselves from social constraints to vent our frustrations as and how we please, as people affected by racism. Nor do I wish to return to the notorious origins of hate, to the rawness of an allegedly wild, irrational, untouched and destructive emotion that existed before our modern world came into being. That would only be a continuation of colonial ascriptions – and a revival of an exoticised image that charges racialised people as inherently hateful.

Instead, this next chapter is about the quest for a form of hate with a new potential, a resistant potential. I examine the various modes of hate in finer detail, and the ways that they entail one another, engender one another or, sometimes, are inseparable from one another. I wade through the mud of unease and discontent.

I want to find other stories of hate, ones where hate is once again made human. And I want to tell a new story. I know that alone, I cannot tell it to the end. My quest inevitably begins and ends with the question: what does it take to hate? What simultaneities are required? What comes with, and after, empowerment, self-defence and revenge? What is the meaning of justice? A radically tender society?

Hand in hand alongside the No of hate, the many Yeses of life must walk.[28]

It's time to raise the curtain.

The Act of Hating

Take me to your land
I want to try to understand
The circumstances that made you
But clearly I just want to invade you
I want your ruin, I want destruction
And I won't be through until we mend this
Tender surrender

Molly Nilsson, 'Tender Surrender'

I practise all day long. At 155 cm tall, I build myself up in front of the mirror. The mirror hangs on the middle door of my wardrobe, a light-coloured three-door wardrobe with a wood effect, the same one everyone has, with chunky handles like small, round potatoes. Garlands of fake sunflowers creep up the walls of the tiny room, placed there as if their plastic blossoms could catch evil spirits. I am twelve years old. I collect fake sunflowers, sunflower candles and paintings of sunflowers, because a child who wants to be a grown-up can't collect Diddl soft toys anymore. Yet there I stand, one foot still in the room with the soft toys, as it were, and the other trying to kick down the door to the outside world, the world that my parents have locked me out of. A large sunflower blossom contains up to 2,000 sunflower seeds. Two thousand – that's nearly as many crises as are going on in my little pre-teen heart. I am the protagonist of my very own Turkish soap opera. And, in the middle of this ocean of yellow and black, I stand before my mirror. I study the points, edges and curves of my face, I furrow my eyebrows, flare my nostrils, press my lips together and stick out my chin. I practise all day long. I practise my hate. Next time – I tell myself – next time she yells at me, I won't raise my voice. I won't say anything

that she can use against me. No words can defend me. All I can do is look back, with hate in my eyes.

*

Every story – even the story of hate – needs actors, protagonists and names. I don't want to call them *heroes* – that sounds too much like an action movie, like individualism, doesn't it? But without people, it cannot work. Because what is hate without haters? Without those people who wield hate, whether alone or as part of a collective? Some people are killed by hate, others die hating. Some people live surrounded by hate and are forced to wade through it; others defy hate and survive through the power of tenderness. Or do they not, sometimes, do that all at once? How worthy are their reasons? How famous are their names? The stories of hate are their stories. And there is a moral to every story – at least that's what they say – but don't some stories have two or three? Hate is no fairy tale: it is a dream, and no moral can tame it. But then again, that is only half the truth. So, what are the names, who are the protagonists? Well, to start with, there's me. And I am many things, but I am not a hero. And there's him, he who goes by the name of Ilya Jakovlevitch Lunev. I made his acquaintance very early on in my search for stories. Ilya, you are not a hero either. Your name harbours no morals; it writes tragedies that call out from the pages of this book. Who you are? Patience, you will be introduced soon enough.

*

As a child, I learned that hating each other and needing each other to get by are not mutually exclusive conditions. Back then, every few weeks, we would drive to Holland to visit my relatives. The older sister of my father lived there with her husband, their six adult children and an exponentially growing number of grandchildren. This family was a phenomenon. A bunch of blasphemous and antagonistic big mouths. The children of my aunt – my cousins – all hated each other. They hated their neighbours, they hated their kids, and, secretly, they all hated the patriarch of the family: their father. An arrogant and overbearing old man who, in every conceivable way, sought to make their lives difficult. Who, even well into their adulthood, threatened them, hit them and played them off against each other. I can still see him, sitting there in his armchair as if it were a throne, grunting and smacking his lips while he watches football or Turkish political programmes, feeling

smug in the knowledge that his regime of fear stretches far and wide, across streets and towns and into the homes of all of his children. ‘He votes for the Turkish fascists’, my father once revealed to me snidely – but even he, too, kept his head down and his mouth shut at my uncle’s dinner table. I often wondered: why don’t the six ETs band together? (That’s my nickname for my cousins, because all of their names end in *et*). Why don’t they just overthrow him? Maybe it was because of their mother’s health troubles, her blood sugar levels: I remember her plunging the needles into her hips, one after the other. It definitely would have had something to do with the neighbours: the fear of their relentless gossiping. But most likely, it was because of the debts they owed him, the debts that had piled up over the years. In the year 2000, a fireworks factory in their city went up in flames, reducing half the family’s homes and possessions to nothing but ashes and rubble. For them, all that remained was the pride of seeing my cousin’s face in the Dutch news: he had rescued the neighbours from their burning house. His father, the patriarch, sat emotionless on his throne and smacked his lips.

On the way home from Holland, exhausted, my parents always muttered to each other: ‘*nerde çokluk orda bokluk*’. The more people, the smellier the shit. At some point, I started to think: the longer the old man is in charge, the smellier the shit. His old, majestic shit.

*

Many years ago, I dated a man. For a few months, we met in big cities and small hotels. I liked his crooked nose. We would talk to each other in English or in Turkish – languages which he commanded with ease and certainty, but I did not. This rattled me to my core. And because he was often quiet, recovering from a hangover, and because the silence made me anxious, I would talk – a lot. I knew the languages which I spoke, but not their rules, not enough to make my stories meaningful. I would often start with ‘I hate …’ and finish the sentence with whatever came to mind. Or, ‘I reeeally hate this’ about this and that. One day, stone cold sober, he told me I should stop my incessant droning about the things and people that I hate. In one of these languages, where the words rolled so easily off his tongue, he said: ‘No person can hate this much!’ What he meant was: ‘You are childish and annoying, be specific, find the words.’

I hoped that someone would break his nose again. But I said nothing.

*

No words can defend me. All I can do is look back with hate in my eyes.

*

Hate? Come on, that's a strong word!

*

Even just the word *hatred* is insolent – not spoken, but spat. The guttural 'h', and the 't' like a slamming door. It can neither be sung nor rhymed with. Not like *fear* and *cheer*. Hate demands to be shouted, to echo in the concrete walls of a prison cell.

*

Ilya Jakovlevitch Lunev is the name of the protagonist in Maxim Gorky's novel *Three Men* – a book that by fate or happy coincidence, and after a number of pit stops and detours, found its way into my possession, as though it had sought me out. I follow Ilya as he hates his way through the first 100 pages – his hatefulness is the raw and despairing response to the poverty and injustice of his reality in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century. His hate expresses itself sometimes as a disdain for himself, and sometimes for his peers, both of which I find most unbearable. However, it is also directed at the rich and, ultimately, those who, in between poverty and wealth, have carved out a convenient space for themselves: the comfortable, moderate, industrious, petty bourgeoisie.

Until the very last page of Gorky's book, and until the last page that I write in this book, I will fret for Ilya and hope that his hate will bring him out of a state of inaction and loneliness and transform his No to the ugliness of the present, into a Yes to the future.

But, at the end of the book, I have no choice but to grieve for him like for an old friend.

Ilya, hate will become a pillar of your soul – but you don't know that yet. You are but a newborn, yet the world is already against you. Now, I will introduce you. I will explain how you came into this world in a Russian village, one that you will soon have to leave, cast out along with your uncle Terenti. When you arrive in the city, you will find shelter in an almshouse, where you will grow up. The house belongs to the greedy bully, Petrusha, who runs a pub in the courtyard. You are disgusted by the way Petrusha turns the plight of the poor into capital – and you do not need big words or

long sentences to know it. You already have a childlike sense for the crushing weight of misery.

You make friends with Jeremy, the old rag-and-bone man. No – it's deeper than that – you confide in him; you place yourself in his care. Together you traverse the city, collecting junk and useful objects. Jeremy will die and yet, before he takes his final breath, your uncle Terenti and the greedy Petrusha will rob him. As if they don't have enough! That's when it begins to grow and flourish in you: the hate.

'Ilya observed many other things, and everything was hateful and depressing, and repelled him from his fellows more and more.'[1]

Ilya, you, who will also be called Lunev, will begin to sell your goods on the street. One day a police officer will stop you. He will hit you over the head and knock over your basket of merchandise. You will try to fight back, and the police officer will take you to the station and hold you there until evening.

'Before this Ilya had had slight conflicts with the police, but this was the first time he had been detained, and his soul was filled with shame and hate.'[2]

*

He hated death; he wanted to live. He cheated the gods and, after his death, he succeeded in returning to the world of the living, in escaping the realm of the dead. He spent many happy days by the sea until Hermes, the messenger of the gods, ambushed him and forced him back to the underworld. There, lying in wait, was the boulder: his fate. For all eternity, he was to roll it up a mountain, only to watch it roll down again just before reaching the top. That is the myth of the tragic and (for the philosopher Albert Camus, who dedicated an essay to him) absurd hero Sisyphus: 'as much through his passions as through his torture'.[3]

Camus sees the myth of Sisyphus as an exemplar of what he considers the only reasonable approach to the world, and 'one of the only coherent philosophical positions': revolt. 'Revolt', Camus writes, 'is a constant confrontation between man and his own obscurity … It challenges the world anew every second.'[4]

According to Camus, Sisyphus is aware of the hopelessness of his situation – he does not shroud himself in futile hopes, nor does he yearn for salvation from God. He simply faces the punishment which confirms the

absurdity of his existence. ‘All Sisyphus’ silent joy is contained therein. His fate belongs to him. His rock is his thing.’[5]

Sometimes, the victims of violence, abuse and oppression recount how hate kept them alive. More than that, how hate became their only motivation for living. Where there was no reason to believe in a better tomorrow, at the very least there was hate. The constantly seething hate, that endures, outlasts and survives. The hate that stops us from rotting away completely under circumstances, that over time begin to seem like our fate. As Camus wrote: ‘There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn.’[6]

*

Aileen Wuornos’s hate could have kept her alive. And maybe it did too – for a while. Between 1989 and 1990 she murdered six men. One after the other, she lured them in from the highway. They were found dead in their cars. Suspected to be the US’s first female serial killer, the myths and legends surrounding her are myriad. Numerous films, books and documentaries give insight into the harsh life that she endured, characterised by poverty, sexual abuse, alcoholism and mental illness. She had attempted to take her own life several times.

Aileen Wuornos was a prostitute. In books and films, she is described as a lesbian – all we know is that she lived together with a woman. It was her partner, Tyria Moore, whose collaboration with police led to Wuornos’s arrest in 1991 after Wuornos confessed the murders to her. In police statements and the subsequent court proceedings, Wuornos tried to explain herself, stating again and again on record, that each of her six murder victims had either threatened, attacked or raped her.

This is also why the narratives about Aileen Wuornos revolve around two polar extremes. While one side demonises her as a lesbian man-hater, the other praises her as a heroic, feminist angel of revenge, who struck back at her abusers with fatal force. To me, the case of Aileen Wuornos is the story of a queer prostitute who was broken down and torn apart by an exploitative and patriarchal neoliberal world. It is the story of how society led a woman to believe she had no other option but violence and killing. After eleven years in prison, it was Aileen Wuornos who sealed her own fate, with a statement she made in 2001: ‘There’s no chance in keeping me alive or anything, because I’d kill again. I have hate crawling through my system.’ Aileen Wuornos pled for her death sentence to be carried out.

Her hate could have kept her alive. But she had likely come to some realisations. Firstly, that, as a hateful and traumatised person, she had no right to live. Secondly, that, as a woman, she had to sacrifice herself. And, thirdly, that her hate had condemned her to a life of devastating loneliness. This is the tragedy of Aileen Wuornos. She was executed by lethal injection in 2002.

*

Amida. In Hebrew, *amida* means *to stand up, to withstand* or *to rise against*. I came across this concept in philosopher Iris Därmann's book *Widerstände* (Resistances). In her book, Därmann cites the work of Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer, who uses *amida* (which also refers to the main prayer in the Jewish liturgy) to describe the armed and unarmed forms of Jewish resistance in the (German and Polish) ghettos.[7] The unarmed resistance involved not only at the acquisition of food (for example, one method was to hide food in coffins, which were brought back to the ghettos after funerals) but also the preservation of social, religious and cultural practices.[8] With *amida*, Bauer takes into account a great many resistant practices that took place in the ghettos in response to the German policies of persecution and genocide, Därmann writes. For example, the establishment of schools, kindergartens, orphanages and hospitals, the sourcing of clothing and medicine, and the organisation of concerts, theatre performances and memorial services. Even in the Warsaw ghetto, there were daily readings by Jewish freedom fighters from August 1944 onwards. '"Amida" aims to achieve the "healing of life", by way of preserving Jewish culture and dignity, and upholding basic morality in an "utterly immoral world".'[9]

*

A state of constant tension. Always on the alert. Listening, retreating, advancing … tiptoeing, side-stepping.

'The native is always on the alert, for since he can only make out with difficulty the many symbols of the colonial world, he is never sure whether or not he has crossed the frontier.'[10] The attempt to anticipate, pre-empt or sniff out when violence is brewing, and to ward it off whilst suffering as little damage as possible. This is what philosopher Elsa Dorlin calls 'dirty care'. A form of constant watchfulness and attention that seems to

inevitably become the fate of the dominated and oppressed.[11] The work of self-preservation in a hostile environment. ‘Such attention could just as well be described as a long labor of denial, avoidance, and defusing’, Dorlin writes; ‘it is also a way of maintaining distance (maintaining safety), of fleeing, or even of preparing for conflict, for combat’.[12]

People who practise *dirty care* find themselves in a conflictual position. On the one hand, they are objects of domination. Their field of action is limited within the boundaries set by those in power. And, in order to maintain constant alertness and manage future dangers, they must continually align their knowledge with those in power; they must study them in detail.

Yet, at the same time, this meticulous research gives the *dirty carer* superiority. They know more about their enemy than the other way around – more than those in power could ever imagine knowing about them. In Dorlin’s words: they become ‘experts on [their oppressors] in order to save [their] own skin’.[13]

This interpretation of *dirty care* proposes it as preparatory to, or perhaps an early form of, non-violent resistance. The expertise of the *dirty carer* is what enables them to anticipate and create the time and space required for organised resistance: for secret conspiratorial meetings, preparation of records and letters, obtaining tools of escape, planning sabotage, or for their own regeneration and renewal.

It is a form of resistance that does not make itself heard in words of defiance, nor seen in physical acts of noncompliance or retaliation, thus it is often misjudged as passive and weak. This division of active and passive resistance is by no means neutral, as pointed out by Därmann – what we call passive resistance is typically undervalued and discredited. Simply because it does not resonate like the loud cry of revolution.

According to Därmann, this division parallels that of the private and public spheres – where the private sphere is marked as feminine and the public sphere as masculine. Quiet, non-violent forms of resistance and acts of insubordination that take place in domestic and private spaces – that is, away from public view – are seen in this hierarchy as less effective than taking the political struggle to the streets. Just as violence in private spaces generally remains invisible, the small daily acts of resistance, for example against sexualised violence in partner relationships, are also rendered invisible.[14]

For this reason, Därmann is interested in those ‘oblique forms of resistance’[15] that show up in intermediate spaces, often in secret, between survival and suicide. The forms of resistance which do not announce themselves with an explosion or a puff of smoke but go almost unnoticed as they subvert everyday routines and practices.

Like Iris Därmann, Elsa Dorlin does not distinguish self-defence along lines of ‘active’ or ‘passive’, ‘strong’ or ‘weak’. Instead, she distinguishes them through a different understanding of time, and history. Violent resistance challenges the present with an explosion – a hard impact, a moment of shock, a revolution that leaves no stone unturned.

In contrast, the countless strategies of non-violent resistance accept ‘struggle as occurring gradually over time’. Thus, as Dorlin writes, it tolerates violence – at least temporarily – ‘as a way of “working” history, as though to change its course by wearing away its banks, in a sense. Non-violent action is a very laborious and painstaking process that wears down bodies as surely as it does history.’[16]

*

Patience. But when will it be exhausted?

*

To survive, to endure, to outlast – like Sisyphus. But is that enough? Can there be no life without the boulder?

*

The group formed around Jewish communists Marianne and Herbert Baum comprised roughly 150 people. It grew after the 1939 ban on Jewish organisations, as many young forced-labourers joined the ranks. The members organised educational and cultural events in Berlin. They distributed flyers and forged connections with other resistance groups. And, in May 1942, they launched an arson attack on a Nazi anti-communist propaganda exhibition. A few days later, most of the members were arrested and sentenced to death. Marianne Baum was murdered in the Nazi prison at Berlin-Plötzensee on 18 August 1942. Herbert Baum hung himself in the police headquarters at Alexanderplatz. They were both thirty years old.

The Baum group was only one of many antifascist resistance groups. According to estimates, more than 2,000 Jews were engaged in active

resistance against German fascism.[17]

Resistance efforts did not cease when the German fascists began to intensify their genocidal policies, even outside of Germany. According to historian Jens Hoppe, there were armed riots and escape attempts in at least fifty ghettos in Eastern and East-Central Europe.[18] In Poland alone, more than 1,000 people from numerous Jewish organisations took part in resistance efforts: from communist and social-democratic groups to left-wing Zionist groups, from youth leagues to liberal, conservative and right-wing groupings. The resistance groups were just as diverse as their chosen strategies. And it was the same in the concentration camps. Despite conflicting political stances, people were united in their suffering, their resistance and their will to live. And in their hate for the oppressors.[19]

*

It doesn't take much to hate. It doesn't take money, churches, institutions or infrastructure. A ritual, maybe. But mostly, it requires the experience of a body in the world. Sure, when I hate, the oppression might not stop. But my answer to it can change. My ability to respond can change.

*

'*In his innermost spirit, the native admits no accusation. He is overpowered but not tamed; he is treated as an inferior but he is not convinced of his inferiority. He is patiently waiting until the settler is off his guard to fly at him. The native's muscles are always tensed*.'[20]

'*The native identifies his enemy and recognizes all his misfortunes, throwing all the exacerbated might of his hate and anger into this new channel*.'[21]

*

When, in April 1943, the German fascists started to liquidate the Warsaw Ghetto, the armed resistance that had long since been forming in secret, broke out of the shadows. 'They ultimately chose to defend themselves, not a cause, a territory, or a people, not even a hope', Elsa Dorlin writes. 'They decided to choose combat over suicide: most of the resistance fighters considered suicide a waste of bullets that should be saved for the Nazis.'[22]

This is what Simcha ‘Kazik’ Rotem recalls, as the last resistance fighter in the ghetto. The number of SS men was endless; they advanced with tanks and heavy weaponry. ‘Suddenly I felt how very weak we were. What force did we have against an army, against tanks and armored vehicles? We had nothing but pistols and grenades’, he recounts. However, ‘I didn’t get depressed. Finally, the time came to settle accounts with them.’[23]

*

‘*The native who decides to put the program into practice, and to become its moving force, is ready for violence at all times. From birth it is clear to him that this narrow world, strewn with prohibitions, can only be called in question by absolute violence*.’[24]

*

The existence of Sinti and Roma resistance against German fascism is even more vehemently denied than that of the Jews. This is not only ideologically motivated but highly calculated – for acknowledging their resistance would necessitate the acknowledgement of a German-perpetrated racist genocide against an estimated 500,000 Sinti and Roma and thereby affirm the legal right of survivors and their descendants to moral and material compensation. Hence, it was an acknowledgement that the German government refused. In fact, in 1956, the German Federal Court of Justice even ruled that all persecution measures against Sinti and Roma during the Nazi regime were legally permissible. According to the ruling, these measures were not grounded in racist ideology but caused by the supposedly ‘antisocial’ and ‘criminal’ behaviour of the persecuted.[25] The authorities tasked with persecuting the Sinti and Roma during National Socialism were renamed after the war and continued business as usual – for example, in Bavaria, they operated under the name of the ‘Landfahrerzentrale’, the ‘Central Office for Travelling Peoples’.

After the founding of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, and many long years of struggle by the Sinti and Roma civil rights movement, the genocide was officially acknowledged in 1982. This recognition was too little too late, and for many victims of the Porajmos – the genocide of European Roma and Sinti people – it merely marked the start of a decades-long struggle for material compensation. They experienced blatant dismissal not only from the German population but also

from the authorities, who sought to hinder their reintegration. To this day, the heir of German fascism – the Federal Republic of Germany – systematically denies Sinti and Roma people persecuted in Europe the right to asylum.

The continued existence of Sinti and Roma in a country – and a continent – of violence which devastated their lives and wiped out their families is an act of resistance in itself. Yet their resistance is not and was not restricted to individual survival, escape or concealment, even back in the times of German fascism. In May 1944, Sinti- and Roma-organised resistance made itself known in the concentration camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The prisoners armed themselves with knives, spatulas, branding irons and rocks, as documented by the political prisoner Tadeusz Joachimowski.[26] Through their efforts, they succeeded in delaying the Nazis' planned murder operations by several weeks.

In Eastern Europe, Roma people joined the ranks of many underground resistance groups, predominantly in Yugoslavia. And, in Italy, they too rose against Italian fascism. There, an underground military unit comprised only of Roma and Sinti was formed, the *Leoni di Breda Solini*, or Lion's of Breda Solini.[27]

Through the Roma Centre, a migrant-founded organisation in Germany, we have some of the names of the resistance fighters:

Giuseppe 'Tarzan' Catter, a Sinto partisan fighter and hero decorated for bravery. His command was named after him after he was killed by fascists in the Imperia area.

The Sinti partisans, heroes and martyrs, Walter 'Vampa' Catter, Lino 'Ercole' Festini, Silvio Paina and Renato Mastini. They were shot on 11 November 1944 in Vicenza.

Giacomo Sacco, a Sinto partisan fighter who took part in the liberation of Genoa, and Giuseppe 'Tzigari' Levakovich, a Sinto partisan fighter in the 'Osoppo' Battalion in Friuli Venezia Giulia.

Rubino Bonora, a Sinto partisan fighter in the 'Nannetti' division in Friuli Venezia Giulia and Amilcare 'Corsaro' Debar, a Sinto partisan fighter in the 48th Garibaldi Battalion 'Dante Di Nanni'.

Vittorio 'Spatzo' Mayer, a Sinto partisan fighter in Val di Non, and Fioravante Lucchesi, a Sinto partisan fighter in the Armando Division of Modena.

Mirko Levak, a Roma partisan who escaped from the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp and joined the resistance.

*

It doesn’t take much to hate. Of course, it takes an object, as Carolin Emcke has already established. That is what distinguishes it from anger, which can sometimes rage on even without a direct target. That is also what, according to philosopher Hilge Landweer, distinguishes it from contempt, as I have already explained in the prologue. Contempt considers itself superior and thus averts its eyes from the object, turning away and refusing to fixate. While hate admits its weaker position, it recognises its potential to become a constant nuisance – much like a scared but stubborn child. It doesn’t take much to hate. But it takes a fixation. And then, it takes stamina.

*

I practised all day long. And one day, I looked at her. She was in my room; I had my back against the wall. She yelled at me, and I looked at her. With hate in my eyes.

*

I cannot spend my entire life seething with anger – I suffer from a sensitive stomach. But I can spend my life hating.

*

It’s the summer of 2021 and I am lying on a beach in Andalusia. The seawater is too cold for my taste and too clean, especially considering it’s the Mediterranean. But the sand: the sand is perfect. Thousands of tiny – teeny-tiny – hot needles that bore into even the most hardened of soles. But there, in the peaceful afternoon sun, I feel it creep up under my sweating skin – anxiety. In my everyday life, I know how to suffocate it with constant activity, but on holiday, it threatens to swallow me up. I know the rumbling in my stomach, the nausea, the awful din of foreboding – all my senses are dizzied. The Andalusian sun stings my skin, and the soles of my feet burn. I hope that the wind from the storm brewing in my chest will bring me fresh air, but I know it is more likely to sweep me away in a flood. I search for something to hold on to, and I find it in a piece of advice from my favourite psychoanalysis podcast: I am to visualise a space, a room – where I can take refuge in moments of anxiety – and make it real in my mind. Or, I am to

visualise someone, a sympathetic companion, who receives me with open arms and reassures me in such situations. I decide on Bugs Bunny. I've known him almost as long as I've known myself, from carefree Saturday mornings spent watching TV on the sofa. A four-year-old's loyal friend. And how fascinated I was by his total detachment! As he chews on his carrot, there's nothing in the world that can unsettle him. I need no pity – I declare on this day on the Andalusian beach – no parental love and no shoulder to cry on. What I need is this sneery indifference. And for several days, I manage just fine with Bugs Bunny. He hangs out in the depths of my subconscious and crunches his carrot in my ear when I need it to drown out the anxiety. Until, one night, he appears to me in a dream. Bugs Bunny ties a rope around my neck and pulls it tight. Writhing and kicking, I gasp for air. I asphyxiate. Bugs Bunny only pulls the rope tighter and chews on his carrot, sneery and unimpressed.

*

Growing up, my parents had quite the repertoire of punishment methods. There was yelling, and forbidding … but the most vicious were those rooted in contempt. They showed their contempt by withdrawing their attention. They ignored me for weeks at a time. My mother was particularly good at it. My cries and complaints didn't rattle her; she saw right through me. The deafening silence clawed at my ears; it destroyed my senses. I wasn't sure if I was even a person anymore. But at the same time, I was on high alert, tiptoeing through the apartment, listening at the doors, trying to catch a whiff of something, anything, that could help me escape this eternal age of punishment. But there was nothing. No hits on my radar. No events, no gestures, no words that could give me a hint as to how the future would play out. All the while, my mother claimed not to be a resentful, spiteful person, not to be *kinci* – 'ben kinci biri değilim', I am not bitter. It was simply a matter of decency, not to be *kinci*, for *kinci* was an insult. *Kin*, hate, was something that you could see on people's faces.

*

It is probably hate's perceived cunning that makes it so fearsome. Not that which breaks the surface in a flashing show of rage, but that which simmers, remaining hidden, until, at just the right moment, it rises to light the fuse. The silenced monster that lies dormant within us, and when the

time comes, heralds in the chaos. Hate is a monster, and as Jerome Cohen writes in his seven theses about monster culture: ‘They [the monsters] ask us why we have created them.’[28] Monsters are not only there to destroy, but also to correct and modify. They open up opportunities for escape and renewal.[29]

But there is another icon of terror that philosopher Silvia Federici unveils, the absolute embodiment of the ‘inner enemy’, and of evil itself. The witch.

In her works, Federici deals extensively with the witch-hunts and witch trials in Europe from the sixteenth century onwards. ‘The common characterization of the witch [is that of] a poor old woman, living alone, dependent on donations from her neighbors, bitterly resenting her marginalization, and often threatening and cursing those who refused to help her, who inevitably accused her of being responsible for all their misadventures.’[30] Federici considers witch-hunting in relation to land enclosures, which became essential to the establishment of capitalism in England at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Witch-hunts and witch trials predominantly took place in societies where economic and social conditions had been completely reshaped by market forces. The expropriation of farmers introduced a new type of scarcity and impoverishment to these communities. Older, single women – such as widows – were the most severely affected by these developments, as rising prices and the revocation of their customary rights to land and property meant losing their means of subsistence.

The poverty that the accused witches experienced is immediately revealed in the allegations against them, Federici explains as she reconstructs narratives of the time. In their state of desperation and need, the devil was alleged to have appeared to these women, and to have promised that ‘they should never want’. He offered ‘meat, clothes and money’, and ‘to pay their debts’.[31] Some of the women proudly wore their reputations as witches to extort favours and resources from their neighbours. Accusations of spoilt brewery products, cursed cows or sudden infant deaths were not unfounded. ‘But if indeed there were women who readily committed such deeds, shouldn’t we ask what drove them to so fiercely hate some of their neighbors as to plot to ruin them economically by killing their animals, spoiling their trades, and inflicting deadly torments on them?’ Federici argues. ‘How do we explain that in villages, where a

century earlier life had been organized around communal structures and whose yearly calendar had been punctuated by collective festivities and celebrations, such hatreds had arisen?'[32]

Through the witch, the authorities could punish those who retaliated against the land enclosures and resisted the introduction of private property, by proxy. They punished disobedience and the propagation of a pre-capitalist belief in magic, which undermined the emerging capitalist ideology of rationality and discipline. They punished the deviation from sex and gender norms that the witches embodied. And last but not least, they punished the witches for their knowledge of abortion and reproductive techniques, that is, their reproductive power, which was then supposed to be under state control.

Witches were resistant women who revolted against their exclusion and expropriation. They threatened and they cursed, and they stirred up trouble for their wealthy neighbours. But, as Federici implores: 'We may wonder if behind the threats and the evil words we should not read a resentment born of anger at the injustice suffered and a rejection of marginalization.'[33]

Or, to paraphrase Jerome Cohen: The monsters we have created, the hate – and the witch – ask us why we have done so.

*

(i try to imagine a world without punishment, but i'm not sure if i can. all i know is that when i hate, the police officer in my head barks, punish, punish, punish)

*

Scar from *The Lion King*, Jafar from *Aladdin*, Hades from *Hercules*, Ursula from *The Little Mermaid* or even Cruella de Vil from *101 Dalmatians*. These characters are united not only in their famous roles as Disney villains but also by the specific way in which they are portrayed, as author Carmen Maria Machado identifies in her memoir *In the Dream House*. These characters are heavily made-up and extravagantly clothed, regardless of whether they are marked as male or female, though their gender representations are often fluid anyway. Their appearances in the films often border on drag performances. According to Machado, these characters are only a few in a long list of villains who are described as 'conniving', 'cruel', 'humourless', 'depraved' and 'insane homosexuals'. They are the

queer villains. And although, on an intellectual level, Machado grasps the serious problem with this manner of representation, and the use of these dehumanising clichés, she still loves these characters. ‘I love them for all of their aesthetic lushness and theatrical glee, their fabulousness, their ruthlessness, their *power*. They’re always by far the most interesting characters on the screen. After all, they live in a world that hates them. They’ve adapted; they’ve learned to conceal themselves. They’ve survived.’[34]

*

Claudia in *The Bluest Eye* (Toni Morrison):

> I destroyed white baby dolls. But the dismembering of dolls was not the true horror. The truly horrifying thing was the transference of the same impulses to little white girls. The indifference with which I could have axed them was shaken only by my desire to do so. To discover what eluded me: the secret of the magic they weaved on others. What made people look at them and say, ‘Awwwww,’ but not for me? The eye slide of black women as they approached them on the street, and the possessive gentleness of their touch as they handled them. If I pinched them, their eyes – unlike the crazed glint of the baby doll’s eyes – would fold in pain, and their cry would not be the sound of an icebox door, but a fascinating cry of pain.[35]

*

It doesn’t take much to hate. And yet it takes so much, because it takes the overcoming of shame. The shame of being hateful, hated, ugly and vengeful. And then, still, it takes stamina.

*

Hate breeds ugliness – that’s what they say. Hate and ugliness even share a word root in German – the word for ugly is derived from the word hate. It originally held the meaning ‘filled with hate’ or ‘hateful’. Hate and ugliness, what a notorious pair.

No one wants to be ugly; thus no one wants to be hateful. No one wants to be hated; thus no one wants to be ugly.

‘Because we believe that evil is ugly, we believe that ugliness is twice as hateful, on the inside as well as on the outside.’ This is what the artist Moshtari Hilal writes in her essay *Kommt auf die andere Seite der Scham!* (Come to the other side of shame!). In the Middle Ages in Europe, nose-cutting was practised to permanently mark ‘wrongdoers’. This fulfilled the expectation that ‘those who act with ugliness’ (those who hate) ‘should look ugly’ (hateful).[36]

However, hate and ugliness need another pair of twins to complete the ensemble and take up their pride of place in the history of Western art and culture. For the hateful and the ugly are just one side of the coin; they are the *Other*, standing opposite the good and the beautiful.

Ugliness and beauty are defined by their opposition to each other. And both judgements require an unwavering conviction. ‘Obviously, you can’t say something is beautiful if you’re not willing to say something is ugly,’ writer Susan Sontag observes.[37] Without ugliness, there is no beauty – and in this sense, the *beautiful* inevitably necessitates the *ugly*.

This duality has been established since ancient times. Plato understood ugliness as a lack of harmony and proportionality, and thus the opposite of spiritual goodness. Ugliness is therefore that which disrupts harmony and perfect order and deviates from the desired state of salvation. It is absolute negation. In Platonic theory, the ugly is that which has no legitimate existence, that which should not be, because it has no place in the perfect, superordinate world of ideas – as Umberto Eco explains in his book *On Ugliness*.[38]

Even in Plato’s philosophy, evaluations of ugliness and beauty were not made purely on the basis of aesthetics. It was not only a matter of what was pleasant, attractive or inspiring to look at. Back then, beauty and ugliness were already integrated in a moral hierarchy: the good is beautiful; the bad is ugly. The logic of this hierarchy went as far as to deny the very existence of those objects and bodies deemed ugly.

In our social reality this can be translated as: that which is ugly, and therefore hate-worthy, is a disrupter, and can be – maybe even should be – eliminated. It means that, especially within exploitative, colonial, racist and patriarchal structures, that which is accused of being ugly is forced to defend and justify its existence, over and over again.

Ascribed ugliness can also become an identifying feature of the ‘enemy’, repeatedly occurring in constructed images and reinforced through

narratives, paintings, various cultural techniques and even science. Hilal provides examples of this in her essay, including an 1893 study in which 271 white women were assessed for signs of insanity. The study established that the women identified as insane were more likely to have facial hair reminiscent of that of 'inferior or primitive races'.[39] The women consequently deemed insane – in other words, abnormal and unhealthy – were linked by their hairiness, just like people of so-called primitive races, who were considered abnormal by definition. Misogyny, ableism and racism go hand in hand. This supposedly scientific study is a masterpiece in the way it manages to illustrate so many dehumanising, oppressive stigmas all at once.

The German fascists developed similar hypotheses, building on their own theories of race. They concluded that evil (which must be destroyed) must be visible on the face of the (Jewish, racialised) enemy.[40]

In colonial contexts, ugliness was a feature of the racialised and dehumanised Other who expressed no sense of culture. European philosophers like David Hume and Immanuel Kant staunchly rejected the idea that slaves could possess a capacity for intellect or aesthetics.[41] This played a pivotal role in reducing the enslaved to mere physical masses, available for forced labour and exploitation. As a result, the ugly and the hate-worthy Other had no right to exist – and were forced to justify their continued survival through labour power and service to the colonial regime. Even then, they were treated more like animals than humans. Animals to be used, despised and feared, all at the same time.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon describes this violence explicitly. On the streets of France, he runs into a white woman and a child. Initially, seemingly fascinated by the sight of Fanon, the child begins to tremble. Fanon, too, shivers in the cold. Yet the child is not trembling because of the cold, but because she believes she has encountered a hostile creature. The child believes Fanon is shaking with rage. The child believes that Fanon, this furious creature, is about to swallow her whole. Fanon writes, 'My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning in that white winter day.'[42]

The ascription of ugliness can destroy lives, even without physical killing. It can take a body and tear it apart, bit by bit, stare by stare, memory by memory, humiliation by humiliation, trauma by trauma.

In the first chapter of this book, I told the story of María Dolores Vázquez. With this example, I wanted to illustrate how misogynistic and homophobic stereotypes reduce lesbian persons (and those who do not present as conventionally feminine) to hate-filled, vengeful and out-of-control bodies. I also wrote about the lynching of African American Rodney King in Los Angeles, and the subsequent acquittal of all four police officers who took part in his beating. And I wrote about the police violence perpetrated against fifteen-year-old Kadir H. in Hamburg, who was later depicted as a dangerous aggressor in right-wing conservative media. Rodney King and Kadir H. have something in common that I haven't yet mentioned – they are both big, tall, bulky figures. The first is a man, and the second a teenager who had every facet of youth and innocence stripped from him. Their bodies were devalued and demonised not only because of their deviation from racist standards of white normality but also because of their deviation from racist *beauty* standards.

Those regarded as ugly are, in this sense, also regarded as threatening. Those marked with the features of hate cannot be victims. This works also in the inverse: those regarded as beautiful cannot be perpetrators. This is why the label of beauty – much like a badge of honour – is a privilege so fiercely contested.

However, that is not the whole truth. For, at the end of the nineteenth century, beauty fell into disrepute, at least in the art world. 'As the relativistic stance in cultural matters pressed harder on the old assessments, definitions of beauty – descriptions of its essence – became emptier,' Susan Sontag reports.[43] In turbulent times of political rebellion, old truths and principles had been offered up for negotiation. The traditional requirements of harmony and beauty were suddenly all too conservative for modern artists and critics. To be called beautiful, but just beautiful, was nothing more than an insult.[44]

To find something beautiful was rendered a primitive assessment. From this point on, analysis, prior knowledge, acumen and intellect were required to properly judge art.

Where art can no longer be considered beautiful, it cannot be considered ugly. And where it cannot be considered ugly, it cannot be hated. Art is at a stalemate. And this is exactly what Nicole Zepter criticises in her 2013 essay *Kunst hassen* (Hating art). 'To hate art is a taboo. An act of treason. And it comes in many embarrassing forms – it can be populist, generalising,

loud and sulky.'[45] Yet Zepter encourages hate – because, with hate, there is no maybe. 'It is a stance of opposition. A stance that fears nothing and no one. And to oppose things is good. Good for the art. For hating art is not the same as criticising art. To hate art is to criticise the system and the art world itself.'[46] The institutions which produce and exhibit art are completely dependent on the market and certain influential individuals, Zepter claims. And that renders any intellectual or sensual engagement with art meaningless. 'Because the institutions cannot provide that which art needs: uncompromised independence.'[47]

I have my doubts that hate fears nothing and no one, as Nicole Zepter describes it. I know that I have experienced both hate and fear at the same time. But her argument for hating art does resonate with me in the respect that it demands a clear position – and not only in relation to an artwork, installation or painting. When used correctly, hate can sharpen our perception of the broader conditions in which art is produced, facilitated, consumed and sold. It can be an attack on the economic monopoly that governs the sale of art, and a retaliation against the gesture of arrogance with which exhibitors and buyers float through galleries and museums, protecting the works from absolute judgement.

Because, in a hyper-commercialised art industry, the moral, aesthetic or other standards, against which the artists' craftsmanship or the product are measured, are not socially negotiated. Their value is determined by the flow of money. Art does not want to be evaluated politically or culturally. It does not want outpourings of emotion, it wants indifference. And above all, it wants buyers.

Late capitalism does not seek definitive judgements. It seeks a universal, interchangeable, willingness to consume, where the value of beauty and goodness is determined by price.

Another reason for beauty's fall from grace is its integration into the beauty industry, Sontag observes. The beauty industry screams superficiality and theatricality; it represents all that is fake and can be bought. And, as an industry that primarily targets women, it is also strongly associated with the *feminine*. 'Much of the discrediting of beauty needs to be understood as a result of the gender inflection', Sontag writes – in other words, the more that beauty is feminised, the more it is devalued.[48]

On the one hand, everyone is expected to be beautiful – especially (cis) females. But, if they challenge the patriarchy, their perceived beauty only

becomes proof of their inadequacy.

On the other hand, nearly everyone can be beautiful, as long as they conform to the demands of the beauty and fashion industries. A prime example of this is the way even originally resistant, anti-capitalist ideas like Body Positivity – born of the Fat Liberation movement and spearheaded by big, Black, queer bodies – are eaten up by corporations. Body Positivity has become a hashtag and a marketing strategy that companies (from H&M to L'Oréal) are all too proud to claim for themselves. Even shows like *Next Top Model* – the TV Olympics of sexist human depravity – have figured out how to utilise 'diversity' to improve their viewer ratings. In the newest seasons, small, fat, wrinkled and even trans bodies get their chance to be ridiculed and disrespected by the presenters and judges.

With this in mind, one could claim that the label of beauty has indeed been democratised, even if only for the sake of capital. However, they would be hard-pressed to find someone happy to be labelled *just* beautiful – that is, beautiful and nothing more – even on Instagram. Because to be *just* pretty – that would be boring and superficial.

But does that mean that beauty and ugliness have lost their power of moral judgement? That beauty is no longer good and ugliness no longer hateful?

On my Instagram news feed, faces and bodies that only a few years ago would have been treated as inhuman and worthless, according to (colonial) racist, patriarchal beauty norms, are now being showcased and marketed. (Trans) feminine faces with facial hair. Big, Black bodies.

But my Instagram news feed is not the standard against which all things are to be measured – it's a bubble after all, and a small one at that. The Black, racialised, big, queer bodies and faces that I see there are the same ones that are still being spat at and abused on the streets, and discriminated against in the job market, the housing market and the health system. These are the same bodies and faces that still, according to many, threaten the social norm.

Studies show that applicants perceived as both attractive and well-groomed are significantly more likely to get the job. Conventionally attractive people also earn up to 20 per cent more.[49] They are favoured in many areas of social life.

The markers of beauty and ugliness may indeed be more conflicting and ambiguous than they were in the past; however, that doesn't mean that they

have lost their power. Sometimes, they simply appear in different clothes. Instead of *beautiful* we now say *attractive*, *well-dressed* or, more recently, *cute*. A well-dressed person is creative, well-liked and successful. They cruise through the office of the start-up in linen trousers, and then into the gallery on the street corner, where they glance disinterestedly over pieces of modern art. They represent that which is desirable – the perfect, undisturbed rule of harmony.

But how can we move past these entrenched evaluation paradigms? Is it possible to change the tinted glasses through which we see the world? Should we try to adjust the lens, or simply tear them off and throw them away? How can the people, whose faces and bodies have been feared and condemned as ugly, take a stand against this form of dehumanisation?

Artists such as Alok Vaid-Menon, Mx. André Terrel Jackson, Enam Asiama, Kezia Harrell and Moshtari Hilal embrace confrontation with the conventionally ugly: they expose and showcase themselves in their hairy large bodies, with their big noses and angular faces, in order to disrupt not only prevailing images of beauty but also ideas of gender and identity – in order to get 'to the other side of shame', as Moshtari Hilal writes.[50]

It is essential to continue to subvert and break down dominant conceptions of beauty and ugliness. Especially in art. Yet, at the same time, these conceptions are continually being rewoven like webs, to trap and dehumanise people; to wrap them up in labels of smart and lazy, useful and useless, peaceful and threatening, human and animal-like. Good and evil. The racist, patriarchal capitalism that we live under relies on this categorisation and dehumanisation of people, at home and abroad, in order to wage war on them or use them for profit. The artistry of destruction is its essence. And beauty and ugliness make up just one of many dichotomies.

If there is anything in the world that is ugly and hate-worthy, from top to bottom, it is this system of violence.

*

HATE. Someone had written 'HATE', all in capitals, on their piece of paper. And out of an ocean of words, this one slapped me right in the face as I exited the Mannheim art gallery. I had been attending the exhibition *MUTTER!* (MOTHER!). It was a long time ago – in the autumn of 2021 – but I often think back to the audacity of that scrap of paper, the rawness of those big, ugly letters. I hardly ever think about the exhibition. It showcased

historical and modern works addressing the realities and conceptions of motherhood: traditional motherhood, queer motherhood, unexpected motherhood and motherhood in unstable conditions. It felt like a textbook – awkward, intentionally diverse and without great vision. It was neither disturbing nor distressing; it didn't excite, or enthral, or ignite. Nothing. It needed far too many words to explain itself. But then, there was this scrap of paper. It was one of hundreds. On their way out the door, the attendees had been asked to write down their thoughts on the exhibition. And someone had wanted to leave just four simple letters: HATE. I was shocked. Hate? I mean, the exhibition wasn't exactly life-changing … but to hate it? Still, there had been a lot of work put into it. People's hard work … right? I mean … but, actually … those sterile spaces, the attendees … this exhibition was made for rich Swabians … well, I hate it too! We need more hate in the art industry!!! Or wait a second … maybe that person didn't hate the exhibition? Maybe they meant … maybe they meant, they hate mothers? Their own mother?? Well, I suppose, they must have their reasons … but, but, *ama, of ya, anam, bu almanlarda çok nankör* (these Germans, they can be so ungrateful).

*

I know no one more resentful than my mother. And, for a long time, I resented her for it. It was not until many years later that I realised that being resentful doesn't just mean carrying a hate with you that you do not want to, or cannot, let go of. It also means being carried by the voices of the past, hearing whispers in your ear, whispers that tell you there can be no *after*. It means living in a world that knows no present and no future, only the constant reliving of the past. A world we call trauma.

*

(i try to imagine a world without punishment, but i'm not sure if i can. all i know is that when i hate, the police officer in my head barks, punish, punish, punish)

*

Throughout cultural history, Susan Sontag writes, there has always been a deep sense of regret that beauty is fleeting, not lasting. It is a notion that frequently appears in the sonnets of Shakespeare, for example. But from

another (often religious) perspective, beauty is found internally, not externally: ‘Deep, not superficial; hidden, sometimes, rather than obvious; consoling, not troubling; indestructible, as in art, rather than ephemeral, as in nature. Beauty, the stipulatively uplifting kind, perdures.’[51] Thus, the fleeting must be the ugly, the hate-worthy, the hate. But don’t these intellectuals know that hate can last a lifetime?

*

My mother is a very beautiful, resentful person.

*

There I was, looking at her with hate in my eyes. The sharpness of her face suddenly disappeared. Now, her eyes looked back at me with dismay. She stammered: ‘What is this look? Full of hate!’ And she retreated out of my room. I recall celebrating. But I can no longer remember if the doors, the doors to the outside, remained closed after this day. Or did they open, just a crack?

*

In my daydream, I sneak out and go rabbit-hunting with Scar, Jafar, Ursula and Cruella de Vil. Bugs Bunny, you’d better watch out.

*

Ilya, the crampedness and dirt of the almshouse repulse you, nauseate you. Your world becomes smaller and smaller; you are slowly being choked. One day, your hands wrap themselves around the throat of an old money-changer who stole away your beloved – the money, and the security it brings to life, lured her in, and who could blame her? But the money-changer stole her, at least that’s how you see it, and maybe you’re right, if you believe you had possession of her in the first place. If that’s the world you live in, a world where women are owned, you might just as well wrap your hands around your own throat and squeeze.

‘Filled with rigid fear and glowing hate, he saw Poluektov’s dim eyes grow bigger and bigger, and still he gripped him more fiercely, more passionately.’[52]

You will take his money, a theft for a theft, and afterwards, you will want to forget – to escape to the cleanliness and order of bourgeois, proper life,

away from the streets. The money is your salvation – who wants to live a life with their nose buried in the dirt? You will seek out a new life, the other kind of life, and you will find it. But Ilya, it will not save you.

*

As a child, I was completely hypnotised by the peace that engulfed me in the homes of my German friends. Their parents, usually teachers or doctors, enjoyed a nice glass of red wine after their day at work and still had enough energy to inquire after their children. They seldom shouted, at least not in my presence, and I never witnessed them try to blackmail or humiliate their children. It seemed that the children did not regularly wish their parents dead either. That I found extremely disconcerting. It was like a world made from candy floss – red-wine-flavoured candy floss. But, over the years, I watched the sticky matted floss pick up all kinds of filth. Behind the illusion of harmony, I saw their inability to communicate with each other, their silence and the messed up ways they punished each other. The feigned interest. The ‘don’t bring that up, don’t start drama, don’t disturb the peace’. These kids kept their heads down and their mouths shut, out of indolence, and out of fear. Because their parents paid the rent, and their inheritances beckoned. The regimes of control in these houses were just as merciless. I don’t know which is better – families who bury their conflicts deep in the soil, such that the pain slowly seeps into roots and the tree begins to rot from the inside out. Or families who argue, who sometimes exchange hateful words, but who don’t overlook pain when it rises to the surface. I know that peace cannot exist in biological nuclear families. I doubt that it should. Because there is always a table, and everyone always wants a seat at the bloody table. Everyone has to have a seat at the table. Where else are they supposed to get their food from? The table has four stable legs – legs too stable to be easily kicked away. And under it, the table hides the unruly legs that writhe and kick. I believe that the pain and violence of bourgeois families are a result of their very definition: to lord over children as private possessions. An arrogant patriarch as a father is just a bonus. In patriarchal capitalism, the family is always characterised by unjust hierarchies and economic dependencies. People need each other. But these people need each other without ever having the chance to choose each other. The children are debtors with no power to choose their table, or their creditors.

*

There's a sentence that often springs to mind, and it's one that rolls off the tongue quite nicely: Peace, Love and Pancakes. Because we live in a 'Peace, Love and Pancakes' society. Your salary isn't even enough to pay the average monthly rent, but we recently installed a ping-pong table in the company staff room, and, besides, all our employees are just like family! Peace, Love and Pancakes! In the year 2021, there were around 12,000 deportations, 11 per cent more than the previous year, but still, our police force is more diverse than ever![53] Peace, Love and Pancakes! When the nurses are striking in the hospitals, we turn up our noses and pay them no mind, but remember when we applauded them on their way to work during the coronavirus lockdowns? And gosh, remember how the neighbour gave us that lovely violin concert! Peace, Love and Pancakes! I mean, we're all in the same boat! Peace, Love and Pancakes! Since I stopped reading the news, I've been feeling loads better! Peace, Love and Pancakes! I do worry about climate change, that's why I always click 'offset my emissions' when I book flights; then my money is used to plant trees in Africa. Soon, I'll have my own forest! Peace, Love and Pancakes!

No other saying sums up our late capitalist emotional culture quite as well as these three words. Peace, Love and Pancakes … I could just as well replace them with Order, Repression and Consumption – the magic formula for complete alienation, forced retreat into the private sphere and a life reduced to transactions. A 'Peace, Love and Pancakes' society cultivates a relationship to the present situation, in which it is treated not just as the only option but also the best option. A present made up of niceties and symbolic gestures – sterile and predictable – and a state of fragile peace supposed to prevent something worse: a hateful, vicious chaos.

Peace, Love and Pancakes is the formula for cosmetic peace. Liberal, democratic societies are generally believed to be *pacified* societies, Achille Mbembe writes in *Necropolitics*.

> Democratic societies have thus if not banished brutality and physical violence, then at least brought them under control … the force of forms has replaced the violence of bodies. Regulating behaviors, governing conducts, preventing disorder and violence – all this is now achieved, as it were, by means of fully recognized rituals.[54]

Democratic and pacified societies are characterised by their collective pursuit of harmonious order – or, at least, that is how they see themselves. It is this which should differentiate them from so-called ‘warrior societies’ (such as those in the colonies), where, instead of rules or dialogue, physical violence is allegedly the sole decider of right and wrong, where society is governed by the law of the jungle. In this sense, pacified societies understand themselves as the alternative to absolute moral destruction.

This image of humanity, already familiar from its colonial context, appears conclusive: humans are selfish and violent by their very nature. That is why the monopoly on violence must lie in state hands. Only through the internalisation of its constraints can the human’s natural tendency to violence be channelled into controllable outlets.[55] The potential for aggression still exists, but it is supposed to be redirected – contested through words and laws in a courtroom. Ideally, people do not stab each other on the street out of revenge anymore; at least, that is no longer the social norm. Yet, you would be wise to remain sceptical. Because the only thing preventing the violence is (self-)discipline of bodies: the prospect of punishment and the internalisation of rules, blame or cultural images – or as Frantz Fanon put it, ‘aesthetic expressions of respect for the established order’.[56]

‘Peace, Love and Pancakes’ societies claim to stifle the ever-present violence through their order. The violence, and the monsters who perpetrate it, must hold their breath, for they are no longer supposed to be seen or heard. No one need bother to dig out their roots anymore – they can remain buried in clichés and empty phrases.

The pacification of society guarantees ruling classes one thing above all: the protection of private property. Just as it ensures the protection of the free market, as the reflection of a supposedly harmonious society in balance. Society as a self-regulating market. Everyone for himself is better for all.

Yet, at the same time, many illegitimate forms of violence enjoy public approval and even state support – as long as they are in the interest of national or military security.

Examples of this are to be found in (Eastern) Europe, where, for many years, emerging armed fascist militias have been funded, supported or integrated into armies by European national governments. Or in Germany, where the Office for the Protection of the Constitution not only allowed a murderous culture of fascism to flourish for decades, but even actively

supported it with infrastructure and money through undercover agents. These structures later gave rise to the so-called National Socialist Underground (NSU), whose members murdered nine migrants between 2000 and 2007.

Pacified societies also show great tolerance for violence in other contexts. For example, when the violence takes place outside the borders of their own country – or even better, outside of their continent. Anywhere from the imperial battlegrounds of Libya and Mali, to Gaza, Kurdistan or Afghanistan.

According to Mbembe, 'The idea according to which life in a democracy is fundamentally peaceful, policed, and violence-free (including in the form of war and devastation) does not stand up to the slightest scrutiny.'[57]

The violence is outsourced and hushed up, veiled in red-wine-flavoured candy floss. We are a pacified 'Peace, Love and Pancakes' society.

*

In a dream, I am in Turkey, Alanya or Mersin, one of the cities on the coast. I know it because the air flickers in the heat, the grasshoppers chirp, the palm trees are still, there is no wind. One day, I walk out of the apartment and down into the garden – no, I don't walk, I float in the warm haze. I come across my relatives, sitting around a table in a circle, with my mother in the middle. Her eyes are blindfolded and her hands are tied. When I see her, my breath freezes and chokes, as if an icicle had been shot into my lungs. 'What happened?' I stutter. My mother tells me, somewhat amused, somewhat ambivalent, that she ran into an old friend on the street who was in a dispute with the authorities. She had defended him – and one of the female officers hadn't liked that at all. She had hauled my mother over to a palm tree and given her a whipping. I see the welts on her face and arms and begin to sob. I am overcome with despair and begin to tremble and shake. 'Who was it?' I rave. 'Who was it? Who was it?' My relatives say nothing and avoid my gaze. They hum and haw and try to appease me. My despair turns to hate, blind hate, which mixes with disgust at the inaction of my family. I want to crush them with my words, but all that I can think to say is 'I hate … I hate this country!' For a moment I think I have succeeded – that will hurt them, I'm sure. It will hurt them more than any swearword! But instead, they reply: 'Yes, of course! Too right!' They steal the hate from my hands and cover it up with their dishonesty. How can they agree with

me, while they sit there in silence? How can they confirm my hate and still think themselves innocent? I wanted to wound them with my hate, but they took my weapons and left me standing there alone. They turned my hate into a lie. And I know this won't sound very heroic, but I simply ran away.

*

I am still driving round and round on the circuit of definitions. On the horizon, I see an exit coming up. I reach for my biscuit mould, ready to attack the dough. Coming up the rear and then blitzing past me in the fast lane I see Erich Fromm. Laughing away, with his definitions all packed up in the boot.

The psychoanalyst and philosopher Erich Fromm distinguishes between two types of hate in his book *Man for Himself*: reactive hate and character-conditioned hate. As alluded to by its name, reactive hate expresses itself as a reaction to 'a threat to [one's] own or another person's freedom, life, or ideas'.[58]

In this sense, it becomes a form of self-defence. This type of hate demands a positive attitude towards the world. I hate, but only in defence of life, my ideas and my loved ones. The more life-affirming the person's attitude, the more intensely and hatefully they will react, and the more ambitiously they will seek to conquer the attackers, Fromm suggests. This type of hateful reaction is the antithesis of love.

Fromm distinguishes character-conditioned hate from reactive hate. Although it often develops as a reaction to childhood experiences, this hate transforms into a permanent character trait. As a result, the person becomes innately hostile. Hate is no longer an action or behaviour, but a quality of the person's essence, which manifests even without significant cause. Fromm describes this state as a 'continuous readiness to hate' – not only others but also the self.[59]

I have already explained how this alleged continuous readiness to hate has been used to dehumanise and stigmatise peoples – for example, in colonial depictions of the colonised as silhouettes, existing and operating solely in the realm of hate and evil.

However, I do not wish to suggest that this was Fromm's intention. For the hating people he identifies in his analysis – his agents of hate – are others. This becomes clear when he discusses the socio-political dimension of hate. His analysis thereof suggests that the lingering hostility of those

‘overwhelmed by a feeling of [their] own powerlessness and unworthiness’ becomes visible as a ‘socially patterned defect’.[60] He cites an example of this from the propaganda techniques used by the German fascists to promote their ideology to the petty bourgeoisie. This propaganda, aimed at creating hostility towards Jews or the Sinti and Roma, needed to build on the character-conditioned hate already present in people’s personality structure. This shows that that pre-existing readiness to hate, which can be traced back to traumatic events in childhood, is fertile soil in which antisemitic and racist beliefs are sowed.

How many Nazis and Nazi sympathisers took part in the deportation of their neighbours out of a disturbed personality disorder or a fascist neurotic compulsion? Neither Erich Fromm nor I can answer that. It is not a question that I even want to answer in this book. And, if I had to delve into the motivations of German fascists and their collaborators, I would find it much more interesting to ask the bourgeoisie, and the petty bourgeoisie, about the material profits they made from the fascist policies – from the expropriation of factories, from looting and scavenging, from direct theft, forced labour and ultimately from the genocide of the European Jews. I would want to know how these profits – several billion German Reichsmark – were translated into capital investment in the German (arms) industry, and how they live on in handsome cabinets and cutlery still found in German households today. Thus, it is completely on the money for academic and author Yossi Bartal to call the introduction of wealth taxes and redistribution of funds in Germany an ‘anti-fascist measure’.[61]

But let’s get back to hate. How can it be conceptualised? This is a question I have asked before. Is it even possible to conceptualise it, to shape it into a universal category? Although Fromm’s psychoanalytical approach to hate does not necessarily contradict the presence of a socio-political dimension, it does consider hate’s area of operation to be outside of the usual, everyday domain. By this, I mean: how meaningful is it, to introduce a subcategory of hate as a ‘socially patterned defect’, when people are always and everywhere parts of social groups and affected by social patterns? Is it not logical for their hate to manifest in the collective domain?

How and where can we draw a dividing line between reactive and character-conditioned hate? Although some people may experience a persistent feeling of hostility without needing an active or objective trigger, for many people (whose lives continue to be threatened by fascists to this

very day), there is a constant trigger. A constant unease, a constant dehumanisation, a constant oppression, that they must react to and defend themselves against. With hate.

If it was not already obvious, the problem with a depoliticised psychoanalytic approach to the phenomenon of hate reveals itself here. And it begs the question: who are the subjects under observation? And can these categories really be applied to all people under such a hierarchical social system?

What about a type of hate that does not just *happen* to oppressed people, but is chosen by them? One that with careful consideration and conviction can become a political instrument of self-defence? Both of Fromm's categories of hate contain approaches to this: reactive hate has intentions of self-defence, the affirmation of life and also love. Character-conditioned hate reveals a permanent, lasting attitude towards the world, that will never be satisfied with its myths and promises of harmony. A constant unease and discontent.

Yet both approaches are missing the collective aspect, the translation of hate as a driving force for a collective pursuit of change. A hate that is tactical, considered and circumspect. A hate that radically and completely challenges the prevailing dynamics of violence and domination. A hate that does not want to reform, but, in the best and most productive way possible, wants to destroy, abolish and transform. A hate that simultaneously encourages, both individuals and political movements, not only to seek out targets and goals of hatred but also to constantly reflect on them. To practise hate, to sow it where it is needed, and to bury hate where it is even more needed. To have a hate for injustice and oppression that grinds and lingers. I want to call this mode of hate *strategic hate*. And there, I see the way out.

*

Sakine Cansız wrote the story of her life on a typewriter, in the mountains, among a group of guerilla fighters. She wrote three books. The first volume, *Sara: My Whole Life Was a Struggle*, tells of her youth – her childhood in the village and her growing up in Kurdish Dêrsim. It was there that the newly founded Turkish state committed genocide in 1937 and 1938 against the Alevi Kurds, who opposed the new assimilation policy introduced in the name of a new Turkish-Sunni civilisation. They were to be made an example of – everything and everyone deemed politically or culturally

disloyal was to be eradicated. The lethal gas which killed the last escapees from Dêrsim as they hid in caves was ordered in by the dictatorial president of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal, in 1937. It came from Nazi Germany. According to official data, the Turkish military killed more than 13,000 people. According to local sources, it was more than 70,000.

Still reeling from the history in this region of violence, in the 1970s a young Cansız became politically involved. The Turkish left-wing student movement grew stronger and became (at least partially) armed, and the situation spread out of the cities and into the villages. The state responded with arrests, torture and executions. However, Cansız also tells how she gradually began to distance herself from the Turkish left, who refused to acknowledge the Kurdish villages in their specific fight against Turkish colonialism, feudalism and large landowners.

After a memorial event for the famously executed revolutionaries from 6 May 1972 – Deniz Gezmiş, Hüseyin İnan and Yusuf Aslan – Cansız was involved in a demonstration. The police surrounded the group of protestors and attacked them. Women, *Romnja* from the neighbourhood who witnessed the attack, hurried over. They dragged Cansız out of the hands of the police and helped her to free herself. Later, the women are sitting and eating together. Their shared anger is directed not only at the police but also at the men from the neighbourhood. ‘Those men who just looked down from the balcony – they’re cowards!’ Cansız recalls one of the women saying. She herself writes: ‘We talked about what women were able to do when they channeled their hatred of the enemy into organization.’[62]

*

Most photos show Luisa Toledo Sepúlveda with her hair combed and pulled back into a low ponytail. Unbound, the loose strands of white and grey hair would fall well below her shoulders. One of her portraits is particularly well known: her neck is bordered by a black collar, and wrapped around it, a red scarf. She has her eyes lifted, looking up towards the heavens. There are deep crinkles around her mouth and eyes, one wrinkle extends itself vertically between the eyebrows. A furious frown line. This snapshot is often immortalised as graffiti. In another picture – same moment, different frame – the outline of a square white piece of paper peeks out from under her collar. On second glance you notice the black ribbons securing the paper around her neck. On third glance, the dark lines on the paper reveal a round,

black, mountainous form. It is a head of hair. Black hair. It belongs to one of Luisa Toledo Sepúlveda's sons.

There is another version of this image, taken from the same scene but with a larger frame. Behind her, some black letters on a white background become visible. I can read 'VENES-CO-VER-OY'. My friend Ana, who I ask for help, fills in the blanks for me: 'JÓVENES COMBATIENTES, DE AYER HOY Y SIEMPRE.'

Young Combatants, yesterday, today and always.

Luisa Toledo lost three children to the fascist military dictatorship in Chile. On 29 March 1985, uniformed police officers killed her sons Eduardo and Rafael, who were activists involved in the revolutionary movement Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria. They were twenty and eighteen years old. Three and a half years later, on 5 November 1988, her son Pablo was killed alongside the activist Araceli Romo in a bomb explosion close to Temuco, the capital of the southern region Araucanía.

The anniversary of Eduardo and Rafael's murder, 29 March, is today commemorated as the Day of the Young Combatant, *Día del Joven Combatiente*. Tens of thousands of people take to the streets in Chile to remember the victims of torture and death during the dictatorship: parents, siblings and children, whose bodies remain missing to this day. They protest for the release of political prisoners, and against the genocide of the indigenous peoples who have stood in resistance to the Chilean state and its colonial policies for decades. On this day, young activists protest the absence of investigation into the crimes of the dictatorship (which officially ended in 1988) and the lack of punishment for its collaborators. They protest against police violence and military power, against the neoliberal and colonial policies of exploitation, and the ongoing environmental destruction that is robbing indigenous people of their foundation for survival – and robbing all people of their drinking water, which is being sold off to big corporations.

Luisa Toledo Sepúlveda, the tireless. She is known today as the mother of combative youth. As a communist and activist herself, she has been fighting her whole life. Alongside her husband Manuel Vergara, she has faced down authorities, time and time again. She does not believe in their democracy, their wealth or their justice. And she has threatened them with retribution, on stages, in interviews and in writing. 'Why do they demand that we be pacifist until our deaths? Why us? Why can't we use violence against

them?’ she said. ‘Don’t ask me to be pacifist. I never will be! The month of March comes and the youth come to me again … I see the smile of Rafael in every child, in every youth who goes out to fight. The serenity of Pablo, the eloquence of Eduardo, and this is who I am, compañeros.’[63]

*

Amida. In Hebrew, it means *to stand up*, *to withstand* or *to rise against*. Amida is also the ancient name of a city on the right bank of the river Tigris, often labelled the secret capital of Kurdistan. In Armenian, it is called *Amid*, in Aramaic, *Amedu*, in Kurmanji, *Amed*, in Arabic and Zaza, *Diyarbekir* and in Turkish, *Diyarbakır*. In this city of many names, there is a military prison known for its torture chambers. Not long after the demonstration of 6 May, Sakine Cansız was arrested as one of the founding members of the armed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). For twelve years she was kept in the military prison, in this city once called Amida, experiencing the torture for herself. After her release, she continued with the work that she had begun before her capture. She, who had asked what women could do if they channelled their hatred of the enemy into organisation, established the party’s armed and unarmed women’s cadres.

*

Halfway through the nineteenth century, a young Chilean nation was waging war. On the one side, they fought against the colonial power of Spain – whose military aggressions and wars of conquest continued to plague them, despite their official independence from Spain in 1810. On the other side, and another front, Chile was launching the attacks. Between 1861 and 1883, the Chilean government executed countless military campaigns on the southern border with Argentina, in the name of the *Pacificación de la Araucanía*: the Pacification of Araucanía.

The Chilean military *pacified* the Mapuches living in this region – because the young war-torn nation needed the indigenous peoples’ arable land and acreage in order to regain national wealth. The so-called pacification resulted in the mass killing of thousands of Mapuches, and the violent annexation of their lands by the Chilean state.

In history, it is always the victors that bring peace.

Lonko Juana Calfunao Paillaléf, a Mapuche chief fighting for recognition of the Chilean genocide against her own people in the international criminal

court, told the *Guardian*: ‘In the so-called Pacification of Araucania, the Chilean army with the complicity of the Catholic church, invaded our territory, burned our [homes], killing our people and drowning babies in the rivers. Even today … we are hostages of states that don’t recognize our Mapuche nationality.’[64]

In January 2018, another man entered Araucanía to bring peace: Pope Francis. He was received by 400,000 Mapuches in Temuco. There, in his opening address, he urged the Chilean state to heed the existing peace agreements. But his warning also extended to the Mapuches. Francis called on them to abstain from plotting attacks and acts of revenge.[65] There, on the very land where the Chilean state commenced the expropriation and mass murder of the Mapuche more than 150 years ago; there, where thirty years ago, Luisa Toledo’s son Pablo Vergara and Araceli Romo were killed by a car bomb, Pope Francis chose to advocate for a mutual culture of appreciation and unity. This is to be achieved, so he said, not by force, but through a commitment to non-violence. Because violence, Francis said, can make a just cause turn into a lie.

*

MONEY HAS THE POWER OVER ALL DEFINITIONS IT HAS THE POWER TO REVERSE THE DIRECTION OF ALL TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS IT TURNS A JUST CAUSE INTO A LIE AND VIOLENCE INTO PEACE[66]

*

In January 2018, Turkey marched into Afrîn – one of three cantons in the Kurdish region of Rojava in North and East Syria. The peoples of this region agreed to a social contract in 2012 which stipulated the establishment of an autonomous system of self-government resting on pillars of council democracy, ecology, and ethnic and religious pluralism. The guiding principles for this new form of community without nation, without centralised government or capitalist economic system, stemmed from the theoretical model of democratic confederalism – thought out by the PKK founder Abdullah Öcalan during his time in solitary confinement on the Turkish island of İmralı.

Until the Turkish invasion, Afrîn had managed to escape the devastation of the Syrian civil war. But in the years following – and to this very day –

Turkish troops and Islamist militias have occupied and plundered Afrîn, forcibly displacing Assyrians, Arabs, Yazidis, Kurds, Turkmen and other ethnic and religious peoples who had fought together against the so-called Islamic State (IS).

On the orders of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, this military offensive – in direct violation of international law – was named *Zeytin Dalı Harekâtı*, Operation Olive Branch. Olive branch, as in the symbol of peace.

*

On 29 March 2020, Luisa Toledo stands on stage. Dressed all in black, two strands of silver hair poke out from under her grey headscarf. On her chest, she displays a black-and-white photo of a young man. With black hair. In the background a black flag flies; the clear skies suggest it is a sunny day. For about a year, a radical protest movement involving school students, university students, workers, unions, leftists and communists, intellectuals, Mapuches and other indigenous groups has rattled the very foundations of the Chilean nation. They demand social justice, free education, a new constitution and an end to police and military brutality. The number of people killed, tortured, kidnapped or blinded by police grenades during the protests remains unknown. But their pictures and stories flood social media.

Luisa Toledo stands in front of the microphone. Her voice is powerful, but shaky. She raises her hands, sometimes to the sky, sometimes clenching her fists in a gesture of weariness, plaintive, almost prophetic. She preaches:

We have to lose our fear!
They hate us!
Let us hate them too!
Why are you afraid to hate?
We need the strength of hatred,
To be able to stand against them,
To be able to fight them.
Because with ‘oh no, poor them, we can’t hate them’
We achieve nothing!
If we want to achieve something, we need to be there
On the frontlines!
Make their lives difficult, in whatever way you can.
Spit on them, at the very least!

But we have to be there, against them.

*

Shots are fired from a silenced gun. Address: Rue Lafayette number 47, not far from the train station Paris Gare du Nord. The rooms of the building belong to the Kurdish Institute. The shooters were sent by the Turkish secret service – information known not only to Kurdish activists but also later published in investigations by the French authorities. The shots are fired – and not in the figurative sense – into the heads, necks and stomachs of three people: Sakine Cansız, Fidan Doğan and Leyla Şaylemez. They were killed on 9 January 2013.

*

When the Turkish soldiers invaded Afrîn, they rolled into villages and cities in Leopard 2 battle tanks. Tanks made in Germany. Germany sent a total of 354 units of this model to Turkey between 2006 and 2011. In 2018, Turkey was the largest buyer of German weapons of war. The 242.8 million euros worth of arms sent to Turkey made up nearly a third of all German weapons exports.[67] Olive branches, and Leopards made in Germany. Now that's tradition.

*

On 21 January 1997, Santiago de Chile (AFP), German newspaper *Die Tageszeitung* announces:

> According to press reports, the Federal Government of Germany has approved the sale of 67 battle tanks to the Chilean army. The arms deal is worth around 15 million US dollars, as reported by the newspaper *El Mercurio* on Sunday. Chile intends to use the Leopard 1 tanks, sent from Belgian defence stock, to modernise its armed forces arsenal, which largely dates back to the 1940s. This is the first purchase of this kind in 15 years. The decision to approve the sale fell to the German government, as the licence-holders for this model of tank, and was welcomed by both the Chilean and Belgian military. The army chief and former dictator Augusto Pinochet was particularly in favour of the deal.[68]

Every fourteen minutes, a person is killed by a German weapon.[69]

*

Democratic societies are pacified societies.

*

AND THE PEACE IS ALWAYS THE PEACE OF THE VICTORS

*

Hate? Come on, that's a strong word!

*

Peace, Love, Pancakes!

*

(i try to imagine a world without punishment, but i'm not sure if i can. all i know is that when i hate, the police officer in my head barks, punish, punish, punish)

*

All over the world, mothers mourn and fight. There are the mothers of Srebrenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina fighting for justice for their children, husbands and brothers, the victims of the genocide perpetrated by nationalist Serb forces. There are the mothers of Tamil Eelam searching for their families abducted by the Sri Lankan state. And then, there are the Saturday Mothers. *Cumartesi anneleri*.

On 27 May 1995, the Saturday Mothers met for the first time at 12 o'clock in Istanbul's Galatasaray Square. They held up signs with pictures of their children and relatives; where are they? After being arrested by police or military officers, their loved ones never returned. They were students, workers, activists. Some of the mothers discovered their children's bodies buried in anonymous mass graves. For this, they demand justice.

Since their inception, the Saturday Mothers – whose children are mostly leftist, resistant Kurds – have been criminalised and persecuted by the Turkish state. Their children are suspected of terrorism by the Turkish state simply because they exist. The mothers are suspected of terrorism by the Turkish state because they seek justice. Because they want at least the

bodies of their children back. Because they continue to call out for them, as if they were still alive.

The Saturday Mothers do not remain silent, even though most of their protests are violently suppressed, and even though dozens of mothers and their loved ones are arrested nearly every Saturday. It was made impossible for them to gather in the square for several years. In August 2018, the Turkish minister of the interior personally forbade the protest. In his words, he accused the mothers of ‘using the concept of motherhood to create victimisation, masking terrorism and polarising society’.[70]

The Saturday Mothers do not remain silent. Not even today. But they must be careful. Even the slightest aggression could confirm the suspicions of terrorism.

‘We want peace! No more children should have to die!’ They are forced to shout for their lives. They have no right to show their anger.

Yet this anger etches itself into the faces of their dead children and leaves a mark on the lives of their loved ones as permanent as a copper engraving.

The first Saturday Mother to demonstrate at Galatasaray Square was Emine Ocak, mother of Hasan Ocak. She demanded consequences for the murder of her son. His dead body was discovered in a common grave, fifty-eight days after his arrest. In a report published by the Turkish newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, Maside Ocak, Hasan’s sister, speaks out: two photos bear witness to the life and death of her brother, her shelter in times of need, her friend and her comrade. In one, Hasan is smiling. He, with his good nature, had always put smiles on the faces of his family and the children on the street. The other photo shows Hasan after his murder, as he was when the family found him.

‘What we saw in those photos was anger’, Maside Ocak says. *O fotoğraflarda gördüğümüz şey öfkeydi*.

> This torn body told so much: that humanity is dying, conscience is dead, and justice is nowhere to be found. These two photos are engraved in our memories. They are our yesterday, today and tomorrow. Our tomorrow is defiance, anger towards those who do not administer justice, anger towards those who ignore the crimes against humanity that are still being committed. *Biz işlenen tüm insanlık suçlarının karşısında Hasan’ın o iki fotoğrafıyla birlikte duracağız*. In

protest against all these crimes, we stand together with these two photos of Hasan.[71]

*

The witch was the communist and terrorist of her time, Silvia Federici tells us. She, who needed to be forcibly civilised in order to establish gendered divisions of labour. Only then could capitalist work ethic be put into place. ‘At the stakes not only were the bodies of the “witches” destroyed, so was a whole world of social relations that had been the basis of women’s social power.’[72]

*

On 6 July 2021, Luisa Toledo Sepúlveda passed away peacefully, surrounded by her closest family members. There is no photo of her lifeless face, and I wouldn’t want to see it anyway. I just wonder if it would have shown her anger.

*

1. Strategic hate means this: hate alone cannot mobilise people nor give them the power to resist. It is not *only* because I hate that I resist. It is not *only* because I hate that I fight. Hate is not an *only*. It should never be an *only*.
2. Strategic hate knows this: resistance is born out of existential experience under the prevailing racist, patriarchal and exploitative conditions that destroy both bodies and nature. It emerges from the essential self-assertion against oppression and paternalism. From the urgent need to preserve life.
3. Strategic hate has intensity and endurance, drive and conviction. It is formed through the stories that people tell, the experiences they share and the common words they speak. Strategic hate is a tool and a method of self-defence that can help us to continue the fight when there is no end in sight and no hope to hold onto.
4. Strategic hate is not always, but can be, an explosive force that tears down walls. At the very least, it is a constant breach of these walls.
5. Strategic hate is a promise of a future life worth living.

*

(i try to imagine a world without punishment, but i'm not sure if i can. all i know is that when i hate, the police officer in my head barks, punish, punish, punish)

*

Ilya, you have two friends. Together, you are three people. Jakov is sick and frail. Pavel is broken and battered. Jakov says, 'You have your wickedness at any rate, you comfort yourself by judging everybody, but I have not even that.'[73] Pavel, on the other hand, hungers and laments, and speaks of the indignity of poverty. When he talks like that, the hatred in your heart stirs and wakes. You hate everything. You hate your enemies. And you want to watch them burn.

*

Many would agree that it is a necessity, a duty even, to defend oneself in the face of impending death. For most people and groups, self-defence is the lesser of two evils. It is often given as a motive for one's actions because, as a concept, it seems morally justified. A far cry from revenge. Because revenge is not a reaction to an immediate threat – it is a response to that which has already happened. To events or violence that have taken place sometimes months, years, decades or centuries ago. Those who have forgotten and want to forget, have taken up the trowel and covered up the past with layer after layer of cement. But revenge scratches at their paintwork on the outside and corrodes the cement from the inside. It shows up with a sledgehammer and chisel, ready to excavate that which has been prematurely put to rest.

Revenge shakes the self-conception of modern societies: progression, not regression; no lingering, dwelling or getting stuck in the past. We must look onwards to become better and more effective versions of ourselves, as individuals and as a collective. Aligned with Christian tradition, this modern virtue demands that victims of violence practise forgiveness. And only then, when they prove themselves incapable of violence, are they recognised as people and groups worthy of protection.[74]

Revenge is maybe the most radical manifestation of hate and thus the most reprehensible, despicable. Wrongful.

The moral condemnation of revenge and its cultural juxtaposition against that which is right and lawful has a long history, as philosopher Fabian

Bernhardt identifies in his book *Rache – Über einen blinden Fleck in der Moderne* (Revenge – About modernity's blind spot*)*. While, in antiquity and biblical times, revenge and the rule of law were not necessarily perceived as antithetical, by the time that states and governments had established their monopoly on punishment in early modernity and then the Enlightenment, revenge had fallen into disrepute. Revenge became the 'quintessence of the Other', in opposition to all the values that modernity stands for – advancement, civility and reason.[75]

Furthermore, the rejection of revenge cannot be separated from its antisemitic function, where time and again, it serves to alienate Judaism from the dominant Christianity. In the anti-Jewish conspiracy theories spread by the Christian church during the Middle Ages, the notion of the vengeful Jew is always central – in the myth of well-poisoning as well as the accusations of ritual murder.[76]

Even I learned about the furious God of the Torah in school – He of the Old Testament who was vengeful through and through, unlike the Christian God of love. He showed his true colours in cruel and hateful proverbs, like 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' – the commandment of revenge.

Yet, according to many experts, 'an eye for an eye' and 'a tooth for a tooth' is neither an adequate translation for the Hebrew *ajin tachat ajin* 'עין תחת עין', nor does it endorse responding to physical violence with physical violence. Instead, it commands that appropriate punishment be negotiated with those who have been wronged, and that reasonable (monetary) compensation be agreed upon. It is about an understanding of forgiveness as something which must first be earned: an eye for an eye.[77]

That is not to say that vengeance holds no significance in Jewish politics, narratives and prophecies – the Lord appears repeatedly in end-time prophecies to judge his enemies and foes with wrath and fury.[78] However, there are passages in the Hebrew bible where acts of revenge are explicitly prohibited.[79] But, of course, there are exceptions to this too.

'From a religious standpoint, the secular legal system can claim to be legitimate only when it lives up to its claim to deliver justice', academic and poet Max Czollek writes. 'If it fails to do that – because, for example, it enables, allows or even causes people to starve, lose their possessions or be killed – it forfeits its legitimacy. Where that happens, from the Jewish perspective revenge becomes possible under certain circumstances.'[80]

Thus, the rules of the prevailing system of law apply first and foremost. They lose their validity, however, when they do not fulfil their obligation to exact justice. An act of revenge is a reminder of this obligation and their promise.

Yet according to Christian, Western bourgeois assumption, revenge is a mere regression to ‘might makes right’: unjust, haphazard, brutish, archaic, illegitimate and destructive.

On the one hand.

On the other hand, our system of law is grounded in the idea of retribution; the necessity for punishment is self-evident and uncontested. Those who are guilty will be punished. That is what prisons are for. Sometimes the offender also has to pay money – sometimes to victims, but usually to the state. It is the state that has the monopoly on retribution. It is the state that claims the offender’s money, their years and their health.

Terms like *retaliatory strike* find regular usage in military vocabulary. When US soldiers were killed during an Islamic State attack in Kabul in August 2021, President Joe Biden promised one thing: instant retaliation. In doing so he followed in the footsteps of his Republican predecessor, George W. Bush, who twenty years earlier, in the wake of the attacks of September 11, publicly swore to do the same. He declared a war of retaliation against the Islamist organisation Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.

The devastating consequences that this Democrat-Republican retaliation war had on Afghanistan’s civil population are well known. The Islamist oppressors were never the only casualties. And the war did not end with the withdrawal of international troops. We know this because, in February 2022, the US government announced their plan to freeze and seize billions of dollars of reserves from the Afghanistan Central Bank – apparently to prevent the money from falling into the hands of the Taliban. However, only half of the 6.1 billion dollars seized were allocated to humanitarian aid efforts for Afghan civilians devastated by war, poverty and drought – the rest was to go to victims of terror in the US.[81] Once again, the Afghans were made to pay for a war that they never wanted. Once again, they were punished.

To make sense of a culture where retaliation is just, but revenge is unjust, we have to take entrenched relations of power and rule into account.

Who acts? Who fears revenge? Who is allowed to retaliate?

It is no wonder that typical racist and classist labels are attached to revenge. While the concept is politically omnipresent, it is simultaneously a concept that belongs to the supposed *Other*. Thus, these labels are required to convey an important message: revenge has nothing to do with Western society's civilised majority.

Fabian Bernhardt explains that media narratives invariably use language and imagery to link revenge with cultures and classes accused of deviating from white bourgeois social norms.[82] Buzzword: 'honour killing'; buzzword: 'biker gang'; buzzword: "gang warfare'. A quick Google search is enough to confirm his theory: 'gang vows revenge',[83] 'revenge act in clan territory?',[84] '19-year-old [stabbed] in revenge "gang warfare" attack',[85] 'Motorcycle gang members jailed after "revenge" attack'[86] – and that is only a drop in the ocean of headlines and news reports with similar wordings. And I haven't forgotten the way German authorities criminalised victims of the right-wing terrorist group NSU by portraying the murders of migrants as the result of provocation and involvement in organised crime. For years, the traumatised families of the victims were dismissed, distrusted and blamed.

In racist narratives, the desire for revenge, as irrational and impulsive as it is alleged to be, attests to the moral savagery of the vengeful. It is proof of their *Otherness*. Their untameable, unjustified hatred. Their evil.

However, the idea that revenge is always irrational and impulsive is merely a myth, as Bernhardt points out. Revenge can also have rational components and demand long-term planning.[87] And, even in societies where states do not maintain a monopoly on violence, people in conflict situations are still protected by social norms, rules and their fellow citizens.

Revenge does not have to be haphazard, and it does not have to come in the form of uncontrolled vigilante justice; it can manifest formally and even legally. An act of physical violence does not have to incur a physically violent retaliation. Revenge can simply mean an entitlement to remediation – and one where physical punishment is not always the answer. In the words of Bernhardt, it is about 'repairing a relationship damaged by a violation of social norms'.[88]

A legal structure following this principle can even eliminate hierarchies – as it rests on the premise that victim and offender are equals, equipped with the same legal rights, who recognise each other as peers, such that they can

negotiate the appropriate reaction to an offence together. In these cases, a symbolic gesture – for example, a sincere apology – can be more important than a physical punishment or material compensation. The decision on what constitutes an appropriate response is within the jurisdiction of the injured party and is executed in their name. Unlike in the German justice system, where courts proclaim their verdicts in the name of the German people – people who are often neither present nor part of the negotiation process.[89]

In this type of legal structure, the victims, the injured party, would not be reduced to their victimhood. They would be able to act and participate in the consequences of the offence. Their capacity for rational judgement would be officially recognised.

But what remains when victims are denied this capacity, as they typically are in the German justice system? When they are not allowed to formulate a response or demand consequences, because both the offenders and the dominant justice system prevent it? What remains when the institutions of the law do not honour their promise of justice? When they instead become perpetrators, complicit in the regime of violence?

Are the lines between self-defence and revenge not then blurred?

Is the rift between law and justice not then an unbridgeable crater?

Is there anything left then, but hate?

Trauma?

Is not revenge then the only option?

Even if revenge does not cut its ties to violence and stop it in its tracks, even if revenge does answer violence with counterviolence, does it not, at the very least, break the silence? Is it not a public outcry? ‘Something isn’t right here!’ ‘Life isn’t worth living!’ Can revenge not mean making life unbearable for those who profit under the violent system of domination? For those whose comfort comes at the expense of others?

*

‘*In this colonialist context there is no truthful behavior: and the good is quite simply that which is evil for “them”.*’[90]

*

In 1791, an armed rebellion began in the French colony of Saint-Domingue. ‘The slaves destroyed tirelessly’, socialist historian and theoretician C. L. R. James writes, as he outlines the events of the revolt in his 1938 book *The*

Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution.[91] The slaves would have sought salvation in the destruction of those things that caused their suffering. They would have known that as long as the plantations, on which they were forced to labour, continued to exist, the violence to their bodies would know no end. They had to destroy them.

'And if they destroyed much it was because they had suffered much.'[92]

James continues: 'From their masters they had known rape, torture, degradation, and, at the slightest provocation, death. They returned in kind. For two centuries the higher civilization had shown them that power was used for wreaking your will on those whom you controlled. Now that they held power they did as they had been taught.'

'"Vengeance! Vengeance!" was their war-cry.'[93]

*

Ascher Schwarz, Lithuanian Jew, in a letter to his sister in Palestine (1943): 'Don't look for business or job advancement, just take up arms, murder everyone you come across (from the German nation), people, women and small children, because that's what they did to us. The greatest writer is not talented enough to describe their cruelty towards your brothers.

'Therefore, you must be intent on revenge only! Vengeance! Vengeance!'[94]

*

Revenge, even just the word itself. The 'r' splutters in the throat like an old motor; the 'v' purrs like a cat lying in wait. The '*enge*' lingers on the tongue well after the word has been swallowed. The plan and the execution. As if the word itself is a transgression to be punished. Revenge doesn't stutter its way out of the mouth when spoken; it erupts – landing as a globule of spit on the face of the enemy.

*

'The blood pulsed through our veins. We would avenge our people, taking no joy nor relish in it. But we would avenge them' – these are the words of Jewish resistance fighter and avenger Hanoch Bartov.[95]

It is common knowledge that the end of German fascism was no real end. Many Nazi veterans were quickly rehabilitated, and the legal prosecution of the crimes was largely suspended only ten years after the end of the war.[96]

Hardly any Germans saw themselves as guilty, and the vast majority – more than 70 per cent – opposed financial restitution for the victims, let alone the return of stolen and dispossessed property to their rightful Jewish owners.[97] Former members of the SS Nazi military organisation enjoyed pensions, while former forced labourers – Jews, Roma and Sinti, political prisoners, (Soviet) prisoners of war, and also queer people – had to fight for meagre compensation payments, and still have to, to this day.[98]

In response to the ongoing injustice, former Jewish militant and resistance groups rebranded as revenge groups. Some worked to uncover and block Nazi escape routes to Spain and South America. Others executed Nazis they had tracked down, after conducting interrogations and improvised court proceedings. And others, like those in the radical group Nakam, advocated for the collective punishment of all Germans. They planned large-scale attacks to kill as many people as possible.

'For them, it was about revenge and retribution in historic proportions – not between individuals, but between the Jewish and German people', lawyer and author Achim Doerfer comments. 'It was deterrence at any cost, for they hated the Jews anyway. That's how I understand it.'[99]

Even among Jewish civilians, the desire to repay that which they had personally experienced, led to spontaneous, mostly covert, acts of revenge. 'There may have been more killings of Germans by individual Jews in the twilight of liberation than the historical record suggests and survivors recall,' historian Laura Jockusch writes, 'owing to self-censorship, the fear of criminal charges or the belief that embracing revenge would "validate" Nazi propaganda and anti-Semitic fantasies.'[100]

However, many organised avengers were outspoken about their acts of retribution in interviews years later, no longer afraid to admit that they were consumed with, and sometimes driven by, hate.

Yet this revenge was not only about achieving temporary satisfaction through individual acts; it was also a way to criticise the widespread apathy in society, to practice self-defence, and to send a warning to future generations. Here, revenge was an intervention in history and an act of prevention. It was to ensure a future in which heinous and unspeakable crimes, like that of the Holocaust, could not go unpunished. There was to be no return to Germany's murderous normality. 'On you rests the absolute obligation to carry out our revenge', the resistance fighter Zippora Birman instructs; 'Let no one of you sleep at night or during the day: as we are in

the shadow of death, let it also be so for you in revenging the blood that has been spilt.'[101]

The Jewish Brigade soldier and avenger Chaim Miller also recalls: 'The Nazis abused, humiliated, beat, shot and gassed millions of Jews. For example, my mother was deported to Riga and shot there in some goddamned forest.' For that, he sought revenge.

Miller was deployed in the British special forces after the war, where he tracked down high-ranking SS and Gestapo members alongside other Jewish agents, on the pretext of interrogating them. The group conducted what they called 'trials' deep in the forest: if the Nazi official's guilt could be established without doubt, he was to dig his own grave, and a single gunshot ensured he would never leave it again. For Miller, it was never about attacking the civilian population at random. But the perpetrators, they had to pay. After all, 'someone had to punish those responsible'.[102]

*

(i try to imagine a world without punishment, but i'm not sure if i can. all i know is that when i hate, the police officer in my head barks, punish, punish, punish)

*

Revenge, even just the idea of it, makes your hair stand on end and your blood rush. The very idea of it is frowned upon – and yet, despite this, or maybe because of it, revenge is inescapable. It pervades the culture, in fantasies, secrets, cinemas, literature, myths and dreams. But in all these different formats, essential questions remain: who writes of revenge? Who dreams of it? Why and out of which circumstances? For what future?

*

(i try to imagine a world without punishment, but i'm not sure if i can. all i know is that when i hate, the police officer in my head barks, punish, punish, punish, hate, hate, hate)

*

In her *Denktagebuch* (Thought diary) from 1950, Hannah Arendt writes: 'The gesture of forgiveness radically destroys the notion of parity and with it the very foundation of human relationships, in such a way that no form of

relationship can be possible afterwards. Human forgiveness can only mean self-denial of revenge, self-silencing and self-dismissal, which is the fundamental resignation. Revenge, however, remains close to the other and does not tear the relationship apart.’[103]

*

The fixation is crucial.

*

I was maybe seven or eight years old when I first started having this fantasy. Every night, before going to sleep, I would imagine that, one day, I would be very powerful. Maybe I would have my own army, or at the very least a circle of loyal followers willing to carry out my every order. And all those who had wronged me would line up in a row. And I would pass judgement on them. I would loom over them – I wouldn’t sit on a throne, but I would be bigger, bigger than all of them. And, one after the other, they would stand before me, ten, twenty, thirty of them. Parents, sister, neighbours, classmates. Everyone who had yelled at me and humiliated me. Then I would give the sentencing. And in my imagination, the sentence was often a death sentence. I was both judge and executioner. It was one of my favourite daydreams.

*

In October 2021, a well-known Neo-Nazi passed away. ‘Finally,’ I think to myself as I read the news report, ‘finally, he’s croaked.’ He was one of the most prominent and active right-wing extremists in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, known for his brutality and his multiple prior convictions (for aggravated battery, among other offences). I spent half of my teenage years (or at least it felt like half) trying to obstruct the Nazi marches he and his buddies organised in neighbouring cities. In those days, his face haunted my dreams. ‘It’s poor taste to celebrate a person’s death,’ some people on X commented, ‘even if they’re a Nazi’. They can only write that because they’ve never had a Nazi visit them in their dreams.

*

(i try to imagine a world without punishment, but i’m not sure if i can. all i know is that when i hate, the police officer in my head barks, punish,

punish, punish, punish,

Stills from the 1972 film *Dönüş* (Akün Film), directed by Türkân Şoray

In this unforgettable film, Türkân Şoray took on not only the leading role but also the direction. Her flawless beauty – a holy relic of Turkish cinema – compounds with the dirt on her face and the toughness of her look. Her legendary captivating gaze gives way to horror and hatred at the injustice she suffers. I doubt that there are many other films from the 1970s in which a peasant woman, armed with anger and a gun, fights for her life against the revenge of a man.

I also stumble across another film about revenge, but one that takes place in a completely different social context. Set in Istanbul's high society, this drama has a simple yet memorable title, *Nefret*. Hate. It is a super trashy story from the '80s about a rivalry, with a young Hülya Avşar and the iconic Fatma Girik in the leading roles, playing daughter and mother respectively. And although I can already tell where this film is going after the first few minutes, I keep watching, fascinated by Hülya Avşar's different leotards.

In short: a misogynistic daughter hates her super-rich mother, Fatma, the owner of a manufacturing empire. Her hate for her mother is profound – really, she hates her right to her core – as she professes again and again in agonising monologues. She hates her so much, in fact, that she steals her mother's seedy fiancé and becomes pregnant by him. And, when he eventually decides to leave the daughter and go back to the mother, the daughter shoots him. Yet, even this isn't enough to make the mother hate her daughter. Standing before the court, she takes the blame for the crime to protect her daughter.

Gosh, the selflessness of mothers.

The filmmaker responsible, Osman F. Seden, who shot over 120 films between 1955 and 1989, also wrote the screenplay for *Nefret*. I would presume he is one of those filmmakers who love such stories of mother–daughter revenge and rivalry. Maybe it is the taboo of it that turns them on: to think that the seemingly natural, unbreakable bond between mother and daughter could be shattered by the machinations of men. A story, in which even childbirth becomes a means of warfare and the uterus an instrument of blackmail. And where all this suffering is only invented, so that, in the end, the self-sacrificial nature of the mother can triumph over everything.

Even in Gülcan's journey of suffering and self-defence in *Dönüş*, there is only room for one possible ending: No to revenge, and Yes to motherhood. This decision comes to her in the form of a blonde child, left in her custody after İbrahim's death. Gülcan's own child was drowned after he was torn from her arms by her fellow villagers, on the orders of the evil landowner.

Gülcan and Fatma, as different as they are, are united in their martyrdom and motherhood. Whether farmer or chairperson of a manufacturing empire – they suffer in silence for the greater good. The patriarchal revenge seeks not only their surrender and their destruction, but also their isolation.

*

Ilya, hate has become the fabric of your soul, and you haven't even realised it. Sitting in the warmth of your own shop, the bourgeois life that you always wanted is now within reach. The poverty and disease you see written on your two friends' faces disgust you. You don't want to end up like them. Yet therein lies the misery of your daily life; you count the banknotes against the days; it is but a game of subtraction. The love you felt was a lie; the harmony of bourgeois life is just a façade. And, now, in your loneliness, even the hate starts to rot away.

'Once again the mood that long ago had possessed Ilya, began to invade his soul again; once more he was angered at mankind, pondered long and deeply upon justice, and his sins, and what might be in store for him in the future … would it always be like this; to squat in his shop from morning to night, then sit awhile with his thoughts by the samovar, and then go to sleep, only to wake and begin again in the shop?'[104]

*

Who or what should we actually hate?

a) Capitalists or capitalism?
b) White people or racism?
c) Cis men or the patriarchy?
d) The people or the system?

*

Cassie spends her nights in bars and clubs. She pretends to be drunk, confused and lonely. It does not take long for seemingly decent gentlemen, dressed in suits and ties, to be drawn to her like fruit flies to ripe fruit. Promising help and safety, they take her home and attempt to rape her.

Cassie (Carey Mulligan) is the protagonist of the 2020 Oscar-winning thriller *Promising Young Woman*. She promises to teach the unsuspecting rapists a lesson. Her methods are creative and multifaceted. She does not rely solely on raw physical violence but also employs the horrors of psychological warfare. When Cassie awakens from her feigned unconsciousness – stone cold sober – catching her self-proclaimed saviour in the act, it is his turn to fear what the rest of the night has in store. Alas, he has welcomed his executioner into his own home.

This is a beautiful exemplar of exactly that which Fabian Bernhardt had described – the possibility for revenge to involve rational components and long-term planning. Cassie executes her campaign with the sober efficiency of a project manager, subjecting her selected representatives of patriarchal violence to a personal re-education programme. Her revenge is a warning. She wants to teach a lesson, in order to protect other women.

Her methods prove successful. But, over the course of the film, the past catches up with Cassie, and her calm and detached exterior begins to show cracks.

Seven years earlier, as a promising young medical student, Cassie's best friend Nina was raped by a group of fellow students. Neither the university nor the police took her accusations seriously, and a short time later, Nina passed away. Now, those responsible must pay. And Cassie is the one who will strike the final blow.

Is Cassie the feminist antithesis of Fatma and Gülcan? At the very least, she does not remain passive in the face of patriarchal violence. She challenges it, and she strikes back, methodical and precise. Although she sacrifices herself for her mission in the end (sorry, spoiler alert!), it is not this self-sacrificial quality that defines her essence or justifies her existence in *Promising Young Woman*. The film holds space for Cassie's trauma, without exploiting her suffering. It does not flaunt its protagonist like a flag, nor does it gloat over her supposed failure. And it does not doubt her truth, or the legitimacy of her perspective, as she asserts her own history and experience within patriarchal, hostile and indifferent systems of law and justice – and is *empowered*.

At the same time, this example illustrates the problem with many modern stories of empowerment: Cassie's vigilante campaign focuses on the individual, thereby excluding itself from the social and political sphere. Cassie has no fellow soldiers at her side, and she does not need them. As a lone fighter, she takes it upon herself to respond to violence that is ubiquitous. But her response only targets the symptoms of a violent patriarchy, rather than the patriarchal system itself. With this, she confirms what Elsa Dorlin calls the 'inevitability' of violence.[105] For those who are stuck fighting against symptoms of the present can never create a vision of a better future. Cassie's reality remains shaped by her trauma; revenge only desensitises her to her emotional distress. She does not promote a lasting

political campaign, a public protest or a collective effort. Her intervention does not affect the structures of society as a whole.

It is the same with most of the feminist or anti-racist approaches to empowerment being discussed at the moment, and those currently flooding my Instagram. Empowerment can mean discovering one's own right to self-determination and authority. It can mean formulating new responses to the past and the present – responses other than our own destruction. Empowerment can mean experiencing oneself as a capable and autonomous individual. But individual empowerment cannot be the end goal; that would be nothing more than 'soft neoliberalism', as Dorlin calls it.[106] Many isolated but empowered individuals do not aid the construction of new legal and justice systems.

On second glance, Gülcan, Fatma and Cassie have more in common than is initially apparent. They are all very lonely. But hate and revenge can only gain resistant power, the power to forge a new world, when they are more than just reflexive, one-off actions.

*

The call for revenge did not last long, C. L. R. James writes. The revolutionaries of Saint-Domingue were 'surprisingly moderate and far more humane than [the French colonisers] had been or would ever be to them'.[107]

'As the revolution gained territory they spared many of the men, women, and children whom they surprised on plantations. To prisoners of war alone they remained merciless', he adds. 'Yet in all the records of that time there is no single instance of such fiendish tortures as burying *white* men up to the neck and smearing the holes in their faces to attract insects, or blowing them up with gun-powder, or any of the thousand and one bestialities to which they had been subjected.'[108]

The former slaves answered violence with violence. Yet neither their methods nor their intentions were the same. 'The cruelties of property and privilege are always more ferocious than the revenges of poverty and oppression', James writes; 'For the one aims at perpetuating resented injustice, the other is merely a momentary passion soon appeased.'[109]

The violent revolt was a turning point. It was liberation from a crippling two centuries in which the slaves experienced nothing but devastation. And yet, it was more than that. In 1804, after thirteen years of ongoing

revolutionary struggle, the former slaves declared the independent state of Haiti. It was one of the most significant revolutions of the nineteenth century.

*

‘I hate men’, I mutter under my breath, as I am sorting my notes at the dinner table. My mother suddenly looks up from her puzzle, which she had previously been absorbed in. It is of the sun setting over Venice.

‘What did you say? You hate men?’

‘Me? No, well … sometimes. But no, that’s just what this French author says.’

‘Tsk’, my mother mumbles, looking down again and scanning over her 1,000 puzzle pieces. ‘Tsk, who would write such a thing? ‘Cause, you know, I … I hate men too!’

*

It should be a celebration of hate; of man-hating. When French author Pauline Harmange published her book *I Hate Men* in 2020, she unleashed panic and frenzy in France and beyond. In it, she had composed a manifesto of misandry: the systematic hatred of men. Hence the panic.

With misandry, she sees a solution; she sees an antidote to misogyny.[110] Misandry is a rejection of the pathways, behaviours, physical attributes and occupations pre-assigned to women. In this sense, I understand Harmange’s misandry also as a response to the figure of the ‘gentle’ (and docile) woman, which Ann-Kristin Tlusty also identifies in her book *Süß* (Sweet).[111] It is a rejection of the feminised attributes of diplomacy and harmony, and the forced work of *dirty care*.

For Harmange, misandry is not only a way to consciously reappropriate the image of the aggressive, man-hating feminist but also a means of creating community.

> Hating men and all they represent is absolutely our right. It’s also a celebration. Who would have thought there was so much joy in misandry? It’s a state of mind that doesn’t make us bitter or lonely, contrary to what the patriarchy would have us believe. I believe that

> hating men opens the door to love of women (and of ourselves) in all the forms it might take.[112]

This communal hate is supposed to offer women a way out of the isolation that the patriarchy imposes on them. After all, a celebration calls for community! And as much as I would like to be happy for Pauline Harmange and her party, and join in with colourful balloons and cocktails by the litre – in my mind's eye, I can already see the sunflower garlands being strung up – I cannot help but feel uneasy as I read her lines. No, there's something wrong with this scene.

First of all: Here we have a white woman, from a country that made a name for itself by waging imperialist wars and brutally colonising half the world (from North America to Western, Central and Northern Africa, to South East Asia), claiming to hate *all* men. So, does she also hate the men in New Caledonia, who are still fighting for independence from France? Or are those not the type of men that her hate could apply to? If not, why not? Does she also hate the men in the Global South, whose labour in mines and fields continues to be exploited for French economic prosperity? If yes, what gives her the right?

Or does Pauline Harmange only hate white men with French citizenship? Does she also hate trans men? Migrant men? Exploited men? Feminist men? Does her hate have a fixation?

Are these even the right questions to be asking?

On the one hand, I am aware that I cannot take Harmange's claim to hate all men too literally. Reading between the lines, it reveals itself to be nothing more than a hostile stance (and justifiably so) towards concepts of cis masculinity – masculinity as a socio-politically manufactured mechanism of power, oppression and impunity. Besides, Harmange talks about her love for her husband, over and over again (which is, to use the language of the youth, extremely *cringe*). And he is still a man. Even if he is not invited to the celebration of man-hating.

Even the guest list – the *Us* that hates the *Them* – fills me with unease. Firstly, because non-binary people do not seem to be invited to the celebration; Harmange does not mention them even once. I could ask her to extend the guest list, but that would be little more than a desperate and superficial gesture.

The real problem lies deep in the heart of the party preparations, namely in the definition of gender identity: the very characteristic that allows people to be invited to the party in the first place. In Harmange's manifesto, this identity appears rigid and completely detached from questions of class and race within transnational capitalist structures.

Harmange's party is supposed to provide a safe space, undisturbed by men and masculinity, for women to bond and celebrate their solidarity. But it lacks the political foresight to recognise that it is not only cis men who profit from the violent and exploitative nature of the patriarchy, and who defend it. In her book, not once does Harmange even attempt to expose the patriarchy as a system of oppression, through which even women, feminised and non-binary individuals, can become complicit in its hierarchical structures. For example, when their financial prosperity is reliant on the exploitation of migrants. When they purchase hordes of clothes made by underpaid workers in the Global South. Or when white women, and self-proclaimed girl bosses, hire migrant women to clean their houses because of their own need to de-stress.

Harmange's celebration of hate promises a feeling of solidarity. But this supposedly unconditional solidarity between women is neither honest nor desirable. Because not every woman shares a political vision for a world without exploitation. Women can also be conservative, fascist and exploitative. And while this statement may sound trite, it is often ignored for the sake of unity and empowerment in today's 'Us against the World' liberal feminisms.

I will use the words of political scientist Jodi Dean to illustrate my point: identity can manifest as 'an attachment to a fantasy of wholeness or certainty, to the illusion of that pure site that can guarantee that we are right, that we are on the side of the angels. The fantasy blocks from view the way that identities are themselves split, contested, sites of class struggle.' According to Dean, identities are not the reasons for political struggle, but the sites where these political struggles take place.[113]

Yet Harmange's misandry focuses heavily on identity, elevating it to a means of struggle. Those who fight have not come together in virtue of a shared political vision. Instead, their belonging to this group is conditional on a gender label – and at the same time, it is unconditional. There are no expectations of these women; their reception at the party is not contingent on their behaviour or their actions. They need only *exist* – as *victims*. 'When

identity is all that is left, hanging on to it can be a sensible response', Dean writes. 'At the very least – and against all odds – one survives.'[114]

As existential as the common experience of victimhood may seem, it is very limited. I do not tire of asking the question: is survival enough? Do we not want more? What happens after the party? Where is the vision of a politically united feminist future that goes beyond shallow ascriptions of identity?

I also hate (cis) men. Not all, but many. However, I do not hate them because of a supposedly inherent and unchangeable nature. If I did, that would mean that I no longer expect anything of them. That would mean resignation. But I still expect a lot from them. A hell of a lot.

'They accuse us of wanting to destroy everything, but our feminism seeks liberation from all forms of patriarchal oppression and therefore seeks the common good', the Chilean performance collective LASTESIS writes in their feminist manifesto *Set Fear on Fire*. 'We are not against all men, we are against people who support and even foment patriarchal, oppressive, violent practices – from murderers to rapists, abusers, and the deadbeat dads who abandon their children. We are also against the murderous social and political system that has been built by capital and patriarchy.'[115]

LASTESIS gained worldwide renown with their performance of *Un violador en tu camino* (A rapist in your path). And it goes without saying, that they speak and write from a reality that cannot be compared to our local reality in Europe. The struggle of many indigenous and South American feminists is a dangerous struggle on many fronts, and an existential struggle, made urgent by the daily threat of violence. There, decolonisation is more than just an academic term: it is a necessary daily practice, and a necessary counterforce to obstruct that which anthropologist Rita Laura Segato calls the 'pedagogy of cruelty': the domination of the male principle as a pedagogy of emotional stuntedness, corruption, bureaucracy, alienation and social dislocation, universality and stymied social attachments and relationships.[116]

This feminism is aware of the brutality of capitalist, patriarchal neo-colonialism, how its violence against nature and people increases exponentially, and how this deadly violence can strike from all sides. It knows first-hand that German tanks roll over these lands, and that violence does not stop at national borders. And it is precisely this radical,

international, multi-perspective struggle for liberation that European feminists need to learn from.

Their feminism is the result of digging, LASTESIS write. The result of a nagging suspicion. ‘That which is uncomfortable, that which perturbs, has to do with the existing system, where everything is turned into consumer goods: bodies, animals, nature, experiences.’[117] Their feminism is an act of resistance and courage in the face of an inherited global political system built on fear and terror and one that, in particular, wounds female and feminised bodies. They seek justice for women and all other people who are oppressed because of their gender, sexual orientation or appearance, and they make no apologies: ‘If, along the way, patriarchal cis men feel oppressed, it’s a struggle of which they must take charge.’[118]

This attitude of expectation is crucial for Jodi Dean too. In *Comrade!* she explores how addressing one another as ‘comrade’ can mobilise people politically and evoke an expectation of solidarity. ‘Comradeship is a political relation of supported cover’, she writes. ‘[I am] interested in comrade as a mode of address, carrier of expectations, and figure of belonging in the communist and socialist traditions.’ She understands the address ‘comrade’ as a ‘generic figure’ for people on the same side of a political barricade and the relationship they share.[119]

Of course, barricades can be built along lines of shared histories or identities which bring people together. But what reinforces these barricades are actions, which can only be inspired by political conviction and decision. Neither past nor present conditions can maintain the barricades, on either side of which people gather. Instead, it is trust in our fellow fighters and the expectation that they will not abandon the barricades which make them strong.

This scenario demands a fundamentally future-focused mindset. It requires people to continuously scrutinise their barricades and their comrades, to ask themselves and each other what they are and what they can become together. It requires an alliance that promises to stand together, and, with this promise, works towards taking further action. ‘The goal should not be safety in a phantasmic space of those like you,’ Elsa Dorlin explains, ‘but rather building and creating territories in which to politicise and capitalise on rage in order to initiate and carry out struggle.’[120]

A shared barricade is a promise. And it is also a celebration. It thunders through the night and into the morning hours when it welcomes the sunrise.

It is a celebration of hate and tenderness at the same time. And there are cocktails.

*

So, who or what should we hate? The patriarchy or those who profit from it? The system or the people?

There can be no universal answer to this question. For each situation, each context, each battle demands its own response, its own strategy and its own barricade. But I can come up with six general rules to follow:

1. Hating *people* must always be the last resort.
2. The question of which people I should then (not) hate, is dependent on whether (or not) I can still expect something from them.
3. I should expect things from as many people as possible.
4. I would be well advised to hate those people who, from a safe distance, want to see my barricade go up in flames. Those who bring nothing to the world but fuel for the fire and lies. And those whose wealth would not exist without them.
5. And those who deliberately set the fires, and, with the deepest contempt, fan the flames to keep themselves warm.
6. Hating people must always be the last resort. But, when necessary, I will hate with all my being, as if tomorrow depends on it.

*

‘Well … look. I don’t hate all men’, my mother continues as she fills in the contours of a Venetian bridge. ‘I hate 95 per cent of men … hmm, no, maybe … maybe it’s more like 99!’

*

I could write many a book about the collaborators of these dominant systems and economies of hate. About those who supply the fuel for the fire. Those who look on with apathy. Those who become complicit in the abuse of this hostile word through *dirty care*. Those who would flay another to save their own skin. Those who take the hate that crawls under their skin and wield it in contempt against their own people, or against those who are even more vulnerable. Those who utilise these dominant politics of contempt for their own profit. Anti-feminist women. Racists who suffer

under racism themselves. Jews who, in the name of fighting antisemitism, unite themselves with reactionary parties and repressive states to declare Muslims the true agents of evil. Muslims who, in turn, put their support behind Islamist and reactionary nations. Poor people who reject other poor people, especially the unemployed. Strikebreakers. Farmers who sell out to corporate landowners. Without these people, no barricade would burn for long.

*

The loneliness that Gülcan and Fatma share is ultimately what divides them. But could hate be what unites them? A peasant and a businesswoman, two mothers from different worlds, both battling against misogyny and the patriarchy. That could be a real box-office hit. Beyond their differences they find solidarity and break out of their isolation – Harmange would absolutely love it! But is it true that Gülcan and Fatma are equally affected by the patriarchy? If so, why then do Gülcan's fields have to burn and her cows have to die? Why does the very environment that sustains her have to become a tool of her destruction, one that ultimately leads to her starvation and death? Gülcan never chose martyrdom, whereas Fatma had a choice – she defended herself before the courts with dignity and self-respect. And after all her suffering, a warm meal and a loaded bank account awaited her at home. Gülcan, do you want the solidarity of this Istanbulite manufacturing magnate, who would allow your body to be picked apart on an assembly line, as she would a chicken's? How is she different from the local landowner? The disguised brutality? Her broken smile? Her broken heart? Gülcan, there is enough hate in you for the feudal lord and the manufacturing magnate – you can hate them both in equal measure.

*

Instagram casts a little pink tile with a black font into my feed. It says: 'Your romantic partner should never be number one in your life. Your number one in life should always be hating billionaires.' I share the post and caption it: 'Radical Tenderness.'

*

Ilya, this is the end. You have no regrets. I wouldn't expect you to either. But, are you not lonely? Has the satisfaction of your revenge on the money-

changer, and your delight in your own victory, not yet worn off? What now? Jakov will die. Pavel will join the revolutionaries. He will write poetry, and articles in the newspaper, words that nourish, words meant to devour the oppressors. He will no longer have to hate hunger alone. Ilya, you still have a chance; a new home for you and your hate awaits. What's holding you back? Has your hate already turned into a thirsting contempt? Don't forget that the fixation is crucial! But your contempt surges uncontrollably in the bourgeois paradise that you have wished for so long. You stand there, all alone, surrounded by these petty-bourgeois vultures, who drink and booze. Your landlords invited you to the party. Then, it just pours out of you, the hate that has filled your stomach, that has turned to contempt, disgust, despair:

> I will speak now. I look at you – stuffing and swilling, and lying to one another – and loving no one. What do you want in this world? I have striven for a clean honourable life – there's no such thing. Nowhere is there such a thing. I have only soiled and destroyed myself. A good man cannot live among you – he must go under – you kill good men – and I – I am bad, but among you I'm like a feeble cat in a dark cellar among a thousand rats – you – are everywhere! You judge, you rule – you make the laws – you wretches …[121]

Then you will admit your murder of the money-changer to the entire stuffing-and-swilling audience gathered at the party. You won't just spit your contempt in their faces; you will smear it all over your face too – you will write your own death sentence. 'Your conscience would not be still?' the policeman will ask you, after the wretches called for help. 'There's no such thing', you will answer. And how right you are. What killed you was not your conscience – that phoney, self-righteous patron of civil morality – it was loneliness. You were only banging your head against a wall. This is the end, my friend.

*

I'm not eight years old anymore. I no longer need to compensate for my feelings of powerlessness with dreams of supreme rule. I don't sit on a throne; I am against thrones. All those who sit on thrones are against us. I

try to imagine a world without punishment. Because to punish someone means to control them, to wield power over them, to consume them. I don't want to consume anyone. I don't know if I can imagine a world without punishment, without that which makes us prick up our ears or tiptoe on broken glass. Even today, I fear punishment like a child. Punishment is one of the first languages I ever learned, and one of the few languages my mother speaks fluently – because as a woman, an immigrant and a worker, she learned early on that it is the speakers of punishment who rule this world.

Punishment is my mother tongue.

All I know is that when I hate, the police officer in my head barks, punish, punish, punish. When I think of revenge, I think of the satisfaction that comes from punishment. When I think of justice, I think of punishment. After all, someone has to punish those responsible! But does resistant hate always have to be expressed in the language of punishment? If punishment is a No to the status quo, which Yeses must accompany it? If our resistant hate seeks to reverse the existing structures of power, how would new political relationships look, without punishment? Or … wait, let's take a step back.

A new language needs its own barricade. But how can we construct it, this barricade of hate, without speaking the language of punishment? Just because we are on the same side of a barricade does not mean that we all imagine the same future. It is easier to know what we stand against than what we stand for. How can we ensure that hate and the desire for punishment do not start to corrode our barricade from the inside? The barricade delineates the *us* of hate, but this *us* is fragile. I mentioned that already – that is its prerequisite. Because this *us* is the site of struggle.

*

'We are full of justified rage. And we want to release that rage. And one really fast and easy way to do this is what I experience as knee-jerk collective punishment in movements', writes activist and facilitator adrienne maree brown.[122] In her manifesto, *We Will Not Cancel Us: And Other Dreams of Transformative Justice*, she asks herself how people involved in common campaigns, such as comrades in political struggles, deal with grief, conflict and misunderstandings. What could a collective

approach to difficult situations look like, when it is not reduced to knee-jerk reactions and punishment? Online as well as offline?

According to brown, most movements lack a collective understanding of the differences between conflict, harm and abuse. She distinguishes them as follows: *abuse* is characterised by the practice of physical, emotional, sexual or other behaviours in order to gain power over others. On the other side of the coin, *harm* is the suffering or pain that people experience, especially from abuse. However, *conflicts* and misunderstandings can also cause pain. And they cannot always be avoided.

These distinctions are rudimental when developing common strategies to deal with different types of painful experiences, brown explains. Yet 'online, we seem to respond to all of it with the same energy – consistently punitive, too often joyful'.[123]

I do not by any means expect people who are affected by sexual, physical or emotional abuse not to want to punish their abusers – they have a right to be vocal and publicly demand punishment. After all, the abusers of this world have enjoyed the protection of the public, laws and established norms for far too long. Nor do I wish to defend public figures who make use of racist, homophobic or transphobic taunts to generate headlines and boost viewer ratings.

Resistant hate against the rule of violence and silence is also needed on the internet. And, for some time, it has already been organising itself there. This organised hate has broken new ground on multiple platforms, which allow marginalised people to expose patterns and systems of oppression and to call out the racist, genocidal, sexist and exploitative lies and false truths that political parties, media, groups and individuals continue to propagate.

Call-out culture is a simple but necessary tool through which victims of violence can share their experiences and most importantly, be heard. They have the opportunity to name and shame alleged offenders. *Cancel culture* is the disparaging name given to it by anti-feminists, and all those who still insist that justice will be exacted through state means – to the tune of 'innocent until proven guilty!' Yet, this sentiment only seems to apply when the accusations are lodged against powerful, respected, *white*, cis men. As illustrated in the first chapter, all others are presumed guilty anyway, simply by virtue of their existence.

Strategic call-outs online do not only disrupt the façade of a harmonious present, but can also denounce our societal tendency to forget, which

abandons victims to relive their traumas alone. Call-outs are also a means of empowerment, revenge and, yes, punishment. For many victims of abuse, public call-outs are a last resort, not to be used recklessly, because – especially when they address sexual violence – call-outs often trigger backlash and counterviolence, through which victims are threatened and their credibility is called into question.

Yet, adrienne maree brown views one aspect of call-out culture negatively. She says that some call-outs are thrown around a little too freely, especially among those on the same side of a political struggle. For example, she criticises call-outs directed at people who are not systematically using their power to propagate racist, sexist or violent slander, because they do not have any power in the first place. Call-outs that are not driven by a strategically channelled and organised hate, but by an impulsive anger, often sparked by an argument or misunderstanding. And she criticises call-outs that are not organised or executed by the collective but only address personal wounds or individual battles.

She is talking about knee-jerk reactions. Ones that I also observe in myself: for example, when discussions on social media leave me dissatisfied, or, when two days after marching together with someone at a protest, I find myself shaking my head at their comments and analyses. Then, my blood boils too. Because these are people from whom I expect more, much more.

These are people whose paths I cross and recross on the way to a radically tender society – a society without the violence of capitalism, patriarchy, racism and colonialism. However, I do not hold any illusions that we are a homogenous and unified *us*. It is in these situations that I have to ask myself: when is a one-on-one conversation with the person going to be more meaningful? When does a call-out actually progress the political debate? When is a call-out a means of organised resistance, in person or on the internet? When is it only a way to stroke my own ego? When does it become tokenistic? When it is simply public shaming? And when does it venture into the territory of hyperpolitics?

Hyperpolitics. Coined by the Belgian historian Anton Jäger, this term has been plaguing left-wing thinkers and European debate pages in recent years. It describes a state of affairs characterised by extreme politicisation without any tangible political consequences. According to Jäger, one of the most striking features of our modern era is the loss of connection to traditional

political institutions, parties and unions, while, in comparison, individual and identity-based forms of politics thrive. This trend goes hand in hand with the increasingly temporary nature of interpersonal relationships, and our declining commitment to them, both in our work and personal lives.

In this new political environment, platforms for self-expression and social networking such as TikTok and Instagram create new arenas for political debate and individualisation. Users present themselves as individual political entities detached from collective movements or established political structures.

There is a common desire for recognition and affirmation that leads us to seek out and commit to political beliefs, in the hopes of being on the *right* side of the political debate. Yet this desire to always be political, without ever being able to engender real political change, can reinforce a pattern of discontent and shame. Everything seems political, yet everyone feels isolated.

Online, we are quicker to show solidarity to strangers than we are to engage in difficult negotiations and discussions with our comrades, adrienne maree brown observes. And on the internet, words and phrases are easily whisked up into a thick, gluggy porridge. Vows of solidarity are stirred in and disappear just as quickly as self-care tips in wartimes. The porridge overcooks, the words and phrases clump together. Without fixation, their meanings evaporate away in endless monologues.

However, in between paid work, care work and political meetings, even I don't have the time or the energy to engage in painstakingly long discussions on the internet. Besides, I prefer to look people in the face when I am arguing with them, as a matter of principle. And there is one more assumption that bothers me. I sometimes hear friends comment on political arguments between individuals on social media: '*They're all on the same side! What's wrong with them? Why are they even arguing? You're literally all left-wing!*'

It is so presumptuous and misleading to place people on the *same side*, just because their heritage or political stance has led them to meet at some crossroads on the internet. Of course, I too would love to see more left-wing movements where political conflicts don't end up stifled by cynical hot takes on X. And of course, I too would love to see a world where instead of being fated to horizontal liquefaction, political conversations are allowed to actually achieve depth and solidify. Where people's words can carve a trail

of thoughts and feelings, with detours and dead ends. Because where there is no conflict, there can only be loneliness.

But the proposed diagnosis of sameness ignores the reality of political relationships, which are full of dynamics and rifts, contradictions and hierarchies (even within the political left), and the fragile nature of the over-inflated and supposedly inclusive *Us* (often riddled with racism, (hetero/cis) sexism or ableism). The fact that people end up meeting at some crossroads does not negate the hundreds of miles that could lie between them, in terms of experience with violence and/or exclusion.

Sometimes at such a crossroads, whether online or offline, hate can be a rebellion against these claims of sameness, demanding all those involved lay out their beliefs, point out what direction they are going in and which turn-off they intend to take. And yes, that may sound like the disreputable '*You're either with us or you're against us*'. But whoever has read this far knows that not everything that has fallen into disrepute has to stay that way.

For me, the more important question would then be: what of these moments of division and disagreement can we rescue from disappearing into the depths of the internet, and bring with us to the barricades? Is it hate or tenderness? How can we take the strategic hate that we see on the internet (also in the form of call-outs) and collectively bring it to the streets? How can these conflicts break out of social media and challenge the dominant system, not just briefly, but in the long term?

I know, I ask too many questions and answer too few. I'll apologise by saying that every time and every space needs its own answer. I'll apologise by telling you that the search for new answers and new histories cannot be undertaken alone. And that the question of how to shape human relationships, more than all other questions, demands collective exploration – because it is the question of a future that we will all inevitably share. 'We in movement must learn to choose life even in conflict', adrienne marie brown writes.[124]

I wish that I could choose life and tenderness in every conflict, at every crossroads – and with tenderness, choose conflict. Yet I know that this is but a fantasy, as long as the conditions for a transformative and healing justice, whether online or offline, remain absent. We need a form of justice that offers more alternatives for action than just the sometimes necessary mutual punishment.

A struggle that calls not only for a No to the present, but also a Yes to a shared future, requires time and energy. Yet our late capitalist emotional culture, and the structures of neoliberalism within which we live and work, continuously demand the opposite: no conflict and no negotiation, only linearity, exploitability and acceleration on the fast track to individual and collective success. Or sometimes, just plain survival. While a productive struggle grows at an unexpected pace, it requires a common understanding of the words and frequencies with which conflicts are to be addressed, such that they can be addressed collectively. It requires answers to questions such as: where does conflict end and violence begin? Which conflicts should be tolerated, and which conflicts only feed traumas and cause harm? These questions form the foundations of every human relationship, whether political or romantic, and they are the same questions that I encounter in conversations with readers. Tenderness, but to what point? Tenderness, but for who?

I know that moving together, changing together and being accountable for one another are moments and spaces of constant negotiation. And I know that to negotiate, to dig deep and wrestle with a new language, we need space, time and collective infrastructures.

I will make no secret of the fact that the structures of our society are against us. All those who sit on thrones, whether small or big, are against tenderness. So, our barricade must seek to destroy these thrones if it promises new types of relationships. But what comes first? And how am I to listen out for this new world without thrones, as it makes its way through the wreckage, when the policeman in my head still barks? *Punish, punish, punish*.

*

The Jewish revenge group Nakam aborted their mission in 1946. Their leader Abba Kovner, married to resistance fighter Vitka Kempner, instead committed himself to helping Eastern European Holocaust survivors flee to Palestine. Before he became a prominent figure in Israeli culture and politics – awarded with numerous literary prizes – Kovner also fought in the so-called Israeli War of Independence in 1947 and 1948.[125] During this time, he published the *Battle Pages*, prose written as encouragement for his fellow soldiers to stay strong and persevere. In it, he calls the Egyptian enemies ‘snakes’ and ‘dogs’.

During this time, Zionist militias perpetrated the Nakba. *Al-Nakba* means the catastrophe in Arabic. The Nakba refers to the expulsion and massacre of Palestinians in the three-quarters of historical Palestine that was to become Israeli territory. Three quarters of a million people lost their homeland in the name of a new, majority-Jewish nation-state.

In 1949, less than a year after the official founding of Israel, Israeli author S. Yizhar wrote and published the novella *Khirbet Khizeh*: 'We came, we shot, we burned; we blew up, expelled, drove out, and sent into exile … Those we were driving out – that was a totally different matter. Wait. Two thousand years of exile. The whole story. Jews being killed. Europe. We were the masters now. – And hooray, we'd house and absorb – and how! … Lies, my guts shouted. Khirbet Khizeh is not ours. The Spandau gun never gave us any rights. Oh, my guts screamed.'[126] He was one of the few members of the young Israeli state to put the crimes against the Palestinian people into words.

The Zionist myth of the proverbial 'purity of arms' was not replaced by broader societal reflection, author Charlotte Wiedemann writes, but rather by a back-handed apology: 'The founding of a state does warrant some atrocities, but these were isolated cases.'[127]

It seems that Abba Kovner also believed in this apology. The atrocities that he witnessed during the Nakba, and which he outlined in a collection of poems in the chapter *Sderat broshim ba-derekh tza-norah* (A road of cypress on the way north), did not stop him from putting his faith in the bigger picture – the national project – and acting in its service.

In his 1949 text, Kovner indeed blurs the lines between Jewish suffering – which for him encompassed both the horrific consequences of the Holocaust, as well as the loss of Jewish lives in the 1948 war – and the suffering of the Palestinians, who were killed and driven from their homes.[128] However, in another poem, 'Farewell to the South', he rejects the Palestinian perspective, which identifies Israeli violence as a colonial export of imperial powers such as Great Britain. At the same time, he opposes those who deny the possibility of an analogy between the Nakba and the Holocaust.[129]

Kovner's revenge was not directed towards the Palestinians – in his eyes they were stateless anyway, and therefore easily dismissed as passive, faceless victims without army or state authority, literary scholar Hannan Hever observes. The time after the Nakba, according to another of Kovner's

poems, was no longer a time for fighting, but a time for forgiveness. ‘The realization that the Palestinians – who had experienced the Nakba, whose homes had been destroyed, and who had become refugees – were in fact victims changed Kovner’s perception. The Jewish victim of Nazi violence – and, from Kovner’s perspective, Egyptian violence – had become the victimizer.’[130]

And what of the Palestinians? Those deemed faceless, stateless and lacking sovereignty? Now for more than eighty years, they have resisted occupation, displacement and extinction.

In 1954, author and communist Isaac Deutscher travelled through Israel, seeking to describe the dominant spiritual climate there. ‘The State of Israel has had explosives … built into its very foundations’, Deutscher writes, through ‘the grievances of hundreds of thousands of displaced Arabs’.[131] Like many other anti-Zionist Jews, Deutscher understood the wish to create a safe haven for Jews in light of the murderous antisemitism that continued to prevail in Europe. However, he did not see a solution in the formation of an ethnonationalist state, but rather in a Middle Eastern federation, writing: ‘As long as a solution to the problem is sought in nationalist terms, both Arab and Jew are condemned to move within a vicious circle of hatred and revenge.’[132]

*

In Achille Mbembe’s *Necropolitics* I come across a term from Plato’s ancient philosophy: *pharmakon*.[133] It describes a drug that can work as both a remedy and a poison. Hate is a *pharmakon*.

*

sense
suspect
anticipate
prevent
evade
deflect
resist
plan
obstruct
intercept

preserve
protect
provide
care
dirty care

What kind of world contaminates even the act of care, without which no one would have a future?

*

Abolitionism comes from the Latin *abolere*: to destroy. As a political theory and practice, abolitionism is based on the assumption that oppressive systems such as colonialism or capitalism are not able to be reformed. Instead, it demands their complete destruction, and the dismantlement of the state and social structures that support them. Nevertheless, abolitionism also requires creation, via the construction of new frameworks, infrastructure and institutions that protect and affirm life. It is a movement of simultaneity.

Abolitionism was born out of the historical movement to abolish slavery, which spread from Portugal to England to the US in the nineteenth century. The 1960s prison abolition movement developed following the same tradition, led by Black socialists. Abolitionism is the answer to police brutality. For abolitionists, it is not a matter of merely reforming racist police practices – for example, by abandoning the use of racial profiling – but of fundamentally rejecting the police as an institution with discriminatory laws of criminalisation which are both products of colonial and capitalist structures as well as the means of perpetuating them. Abolitionists claim that policing and prison reforms do not help people impacted by police and state violence; they only serve to appease the vast majority, who are typically not affected by this violence in the first place. They allege that the security these institutions claim to provide guarantees only the inviolability of the wealthy ruling classes.

‘Modern policing emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century’, sociologist Vanessa E. Thompson explains in an interview; ‘back then, it was already tied to the defence and control of racialised and gendered dynamics of ownership and exploitation. In Europe, this was evident through the strict controls of Sinti and Roma people, but it was also visible in the colonies.’[134] In fact, the historical origins can be traced back to the

beginnings of industrialisation in Europe. In order to satisfy the growing demand for workers, laws and regulations were introduced to arrest and criminalise those with no permanent address and no possessions – Sinti and Roma people or sex workers, for example – and force them into paid work.[135] Industrialisation required new policies of punishment.

These methods used to recruit bodies for their exploitation were tested out in the colonies before being implemented in Europe. ‘We cannot understand how modern policing came to be, without reflecting on colonialism’, Thompson elaborates. ‘That doesn’t mean that today’s police are like those from colonial times. But this correlation is still important for understanding how certain practices continue to persist, despite the changing of the times.’[136]

Abolitionism dissects the complex structure of police, prisons and administration of justice into its individually violent parts. It reveals that the entire justice system is undermined by profit and profitability. The abolitionist and revolutionary Angela Davis has dedicated herself to the prison industrial complex in her writings and with her activism. She writes, ‘[the prison-industrial complex] has come to include not only public and private prisons … the most profitable sector of the private prison business is composed of immigrant detention centers. One can therefore understand why the most repressive anti-immigrant legislation in the United States was drafted by private prison companies as an undisguised attempt to maximize their profits.’[137] Entities like Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, attest to this in Europe. Hundreds of millions of euros are invested in Frontex each year for the purpose of keeping out, driving away and imprisoning poor, racialised people fleeing lands beyond Europe’s borders.

Prisons and detention centres are evidence of the state’s refusal to tackle the real problems, Angela Davis argues: the problems of poverty, exploitation and imperial wars. ‘We internalize this [notion of prison, as] a place to put bad people. That’s precisely one of the reasons why we have to imagine the abolitionist movement as addressing those ideological and psychic issues as well. Not just the process of removing the material institutions or facilities.’[138]

Together with the authors and activists Gina Dent, Erica R. Meiners and Beth E. Richie, Angela Davis also published the manifesto *Abolition. Feminism. Now*. in 2022. They understand the feminist abolitionist

movement as multidimensional work, that demands more than just quick fixes to address violence in both the private and political spheres. It is a movement that takes place on contradictory terrain and thus resists a solution expressed in binary ‘either-or’ terms. For example, either more police or more sexual violence. Either practical, daily forms of solidarity and support for especially vulnerable people or radical demands which disrupt society completely. Either yes or no. Either security or freedom.

Either hate or tenderness.

‘We are clear that organizing to end gender violence must include work against the prison industrial complex,’ the authors assert, ‘against border patrols, against the incarceration of disability, against the criminalization of radical democratic protest – and as centrally, for mutual aid, cop-free schools, reproductive justice, and dignity for trans lives.’[139]

Abolitionism calls for an understanding of justice without state-led violence. It calls for a different understanding of security, and a language other than that of punishment. Abolitionists know that security for all is not brought about by surveillance and punishment, but through providing dignified living conditions and pursuing decriminalisation, for example, of drug-related crime – which in the US, as in Europe, leads to the serial incarceration of racialised young men and trans people.

And no, the police will not be dissolved overnight. Yes, their funding should be systematically divested. But, on its own, the elimination of that which dominates and harms is still not enough. There must be the construction of other types of organisations and relationships alongside the destruction. It’s a matter of eliminating the very reasons which lead people to believe in the necessity of the police in the first place.

This work encompasses the radical transformation of all institutions that should ultimately provide care not punishment: youth welfare offices, public health offices and family offices. It focuses on the following questions: how can we shape society, its social, living and working conditions, such that people do not resort to violence in the first place? Such that people have the opportunity to care for society’s most vulnerable individuals, without criminalising them?

‘For me and many of my peers, our abolitionist fight and future is committed to decolonization, disability justice, Earth justice, and socialism’, lawyer and activist Derecka Purnell writes in her manifesto *Becoming Abolitionists*. ‘All of these require mass political education, a

commitment to understand and debate these issues with people who we love and organize within our communities.'[140]

Building a new society requires all members to take responsibility, including when it comes to questions of law and justice. The approaches of transformative justice seek out new, collective responses to violence and its consequences. They bulldoze new paths out of the never-ending cycle of violence and punishment.

These approaches aim to give victims of violence the opportunity to decide on what they need to heal, and they provide community support and infrastructure to do exactly that. This could be by means of reflective or negotiatory conversations with the perpetrators – where victims can express their wants and needs – or through simple monetary compensation.

The possibilities for responding to harm and trauma are diverse. And first and foremost, the socio-political roots of cases of violence must be uncovered and analysed in detail. Which social conditions, assumptions, norms, regulations and dependencies encouraged the violence? Which means of self-defence are necessary for the people in society who are most vulnerable?

While transformative justice recognises that the past is inextricably linked to the present, it does not simply demand a reversion to the way things were before. Why should a person want to linger on their past trauma, and endure the violence of constant repetition? Transformative justice strives for a new vocabulary for the present and a new language for the future. The relationships and dynamics in the world have to be transformed so that a future for everyone can be made possible, especially for those people who know the constant repetition of trauma. And, in order for that to happen, the patterns and structures of oppression must be dissolved.[141]

'The tools of swift and predatory justice feel good to use, familiar, groove in the hand easily from repeated use and training, [are] briefly satisfying', adrienne maree brown writes. 'But these tools are often blunt and senseless. Unless we have an analysis of abolition and dismantling systems of oppression, we will not realize what's in our hands, we will never put the predator's tools down and figure out what our tools are and can be.'[142]

Abolitionism is aware of the revolutionary potential of human relationships. To launch a movement and overthrow a system, political

feelings and political relationships are required. Every revolution needs people who are willing to take responsibility for one another. Every revolution needs hate, alongside care and tenderness. And the latter is threatened on all sides by the violence and hierarchies of a racist, patriarchal culture of exploiting vulnerable bodies. A culture in which all manners of relationships are contaminated by the dominant 'pedagogy of cruelty', as Rita Laura Segato calls it.[143] Abolitionism, as I understand it, acknowledges the need for strategic hate against oppression, the need to say No to that which wounds and alienates us, and Yes to justice with a commitment to mutual care for one another.

Abolitionism is not a utopia of empty words and promises, nor is it an academic hallucination, as sneery critics like to suggest. In this movement of simultaneity, '[we] insist that not only is it critical to make space for what we have not yet been able to imagine,' the authors of *Abolition. Feminism. Now*. write, 'but at the same time to amplify that the practice is grounded, everyday, and already unfolding – now. Vision and practice are not contradictory … [they are] the insistent prefiguration of the world we know we need.'[144]

Collective approaches to transformative justice, grass-roots democracy and community conflict resolution are already practised in several parts of the world, by people who cannot rely on the security measures of their respective states and governments. By people who have to take self-preservation and self-defence into their own hands. For example, in indigenous or Black communities on the American continent, or across the ocean in Rojava. It is there that I wish to seek the answers that I cannot formulate on my own. There, it seems our new world is in the making.

*

For those who are standing on the other side
shooting at us, spitting on us,
how long can you stand there, fenced by hate?
Are you going to keep your black glasses on until
you're unable to put them down?
Soon, we won't be here for you to watch.
It won't matter if you blink your eyes or not,
if you can stand or not.
You won't cross that river

to take more lands,
because you will vanish into your mirage.
You can’t build a new colony on our graves.

Mosab Abu Toha, ‘A Litany for “One Land” after Audre Lorde’

Don’t even be surprised
to see a rose shoulder up
among the ruins of the house:
This is how we survived.

Mosab Abu Toha, ‘A Rose Shoulders Up’

*

Once again, Rojava is being bombed.

In April 2022, I see the videos online. Stretches of sand-coloured land peppered with brown spots, and rising from the spots, amid the rubble of destroyed city districts, thick plumes of smoke, as if from volcanoes. On Google Maps I drag my cursor over the curves and contours of this land and zoom into the city of Kobanê – there, where Assyrians, Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen and many other people drove out IS and declared the Democratic Federation of Rojava in 2012. The Google Maps image is deceitful. It shows the ruins of a city once at war, but not the smoke. It doesn’t want to know about the bombs that keep returning, or the current state of war there. It doesn’t want to admit the fact that Kobanê is burning once again. That people are burning.

I had wanted to go there – there, where my cursor hovers. But not to write about bombs and fires. I had planned to end this book with the utopian prospect of a better future, of a society that is more just. I had planned to travel to Rojava in spring, my questions loaded and ready to be asked. Because I had promised – no, I had hoped – to find answers there that would fill the gaps in my archives of hate and tenderness. What is needed to achieve justice? What is needed to achieve a radically tender society? And can a society without hate even exist?

Rojava is a place of dreams. For me, for my friends, for us who thirst for utopia. Who cling to visions of a society that wants to overcome the hate of a patriarchal, racist, capitalist system – in which people are played off against each other as owners and property, and nature and human bodies are

ravaged. Who dream of a society where hate for oppression is transformed into a collective policy of tenderness.

But I cannot tell of this revolution, without describing the ongoing reality of fires and bombing.

For several days, Turkey has been attacking Rojava's defence units. They have also launched a major offensive in Southern Kurdistan – the northern part of federal Iraq – with the support of the autonomous government there, on the pretext of repressing and annihilating armed fighters of the PKK. They have sent ground troops, tanks, bombs and drones. They continue to strike down on civilians, their homes and cars. They continue to launch attacks on Rojava, the heart of the revolution – the women's revolution, in which women of the region have fought for their right to political participation, their right to co-chairmanship in every institution, their right to education and their right to divorce. Yet the German government cannot spare a word to address the fact that Turkey, one of their military allies and a member of NATO, continues to bomb survivors of the terror group IS, probably using German arms. Even Germany's minister of foreign affairs, a self-proclaimed feminist, remains silent.

Well, what was I hoping for? After all, Turkey is doing NATO's dirty work on their shared security borders: taking care of those nasty rebels. Turkey is keeping the refugees away from Europe, Turkey is mediating Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Turkey is selling drones to Ukraine. Turkey is making their contribution to peace and security in Europe.

PEACE, LOVE AND PANCAKES.

I actually wanted to go to Rojava. But seeing the bombs instilled a fear in me that has taken root. Now as I sit here, staring at my computer screen, my eyes burn. As I watch videos of the war, fear overcomes me, and with it, hate.

How much closer will this bloody cursor bring me to my answers, I wonder. I try to put the orange mini-person on Google Maps in the city centre to see the street view, but even the mini-person refuses, flailing around before bouncing right back to the start position. How is it even possible for things to transform, for new things to be created, in an environment constantly under threat of annihilation? How is it possible to organise? To be tender? Suddenly, all my words sound empty and awkward. Trans-for-ma-tive jus-tice: nothing but broken syllables, all wrong.

And yet, exactly that is supposed to happen in Rojava, while their territories blaze. I wish that I was this orange mini-person on Google Maps and that my cursor could set me down in the middle of a public platform negotiation – a judicial method that is one of many in Rojava, alongside juries, judges and other justice committees. In a public platform negotiation, representatives from the community – sometimes as many as 100 people – discuss serious cases that affect all of society, for example, violence, murder or sexual abuse. The hearing aims to examine the reasons for the crime and, with consideration of those affected, propose a verdict.[145]

A reconciliation committee is another type of justice committee, deployed in the context of neighbourhood or familial conflicts, to mediate conversations between affected parties and find a shared solution. The interview board works in a similar way. The Board of Elders, consisting of representatives of the different tribes and ethnic groups, is employed to advise on conflicts between multiple families or societal groups. Every person is officially entitled to a court hearing, regardless of their financial means.

The boards and committees are there to ensure that single institutions do not hold sole decision-making authority on questions of justice. They make the members of society bear the responsibility (or at least their share of it) for resolving conflicts, by their own standards of morality, care and solidarity. All solutions should come from the ground up, starting from the smallest level of society – the family, community, neighbourhood or commune. In other words, from where people's lives are centred.[146]

Yes, even this society is supposed to be pacified. But from the inside out. The vision is of a politically and morally educated society, where courts and prisons are superfluous. Where people prevent problems and conflicts and pre-empt injustices before they are realised. Where people care for each other, without the contaminating factors that turn it into *dirty care*.

I know that put into words like this, it sounds almost unbelievable, unimaginable. That is why I wanted to see it with my own eyes. But now it seems I have to imagine the unimaginable: a society trying out a new language of justice and tenderness. I imagine working mouths that quiver and contest, working faces that contort with emotion, foreheads with furrowed brows and beads of sweat. People who strive to make decisions together and build their shared future.

Yet this imagined scene does not answer my questions: can transformative justice work in practice? How are the verdicts reached? How neutral are people in their assessments? How do the perpetrators react? Are these democratic court hearings all just for show? Is it a scam, a performance, a diversion, just to drone out the cries (punish punish punish) in their heads? To make everyone complicit in the punishment?

And what happens to hate? Does it disappear into thin air? What happens to revenge? Between individuals and peoples who were once enemies?

I ask too many questions and answer too few.

I follow my cursor, type out my questions and forward them to the press department of the Rojava Information Centre. I ask that women from Rojava answer them. The first reply comes from Parween Muhammad Amin Youssef. The thirty-six-year-old co-chairs the regional council of the canton Qamishlo, which encompasses nine districts and twenty-six cities. She writes:

> Feelings of revenge and hate can only be overcome when communities that have suffered oppression, extermination, marginalisation and disregard in all their forms, and have fought each other, are allowed to make their demands and negotiate with each other. The coexistence of different groups is built on a foundation of inclusion in democratic self-administration, decision-making power over their own concerns in boards and committees, and therefore co-ownership of this shared democratic project. Everyone should be allowed to be taught in their native language or according to their own religion at school, to get to know their own history. This principle is strengthened through presentations and workshops run by the reconciliation committees and the culture committee, who are tasked with facilitating a culture of tenderness and cooperation.
>
> Courts alone do not create justice. Our revolution is, at its core, a spiritual revolution. We want to uproot the patriarchal mentality in family and society that also manifests itself in the courts, constitutions and laws.

Rojava’s women have founded more than just armed defence groups – beyond that, they have also created their own infrastructure to respond to

their struggles within a patriarchal society. In legal academies, they educate women to intervene in family and community situations. They often work in the *Mala Jin*, which serve as women's refuge centres and first points of contact for those affected by patriarchal violence. The first *Mala Jin* was set up at the very beginning of the revolution in 2011. Since then, the region has become home to two dozen centres.[147] Furthermore, in 2016, Rojava women founded the self-regulated ecological village Jinwar, the name of which means 'women's place'. There, women are free to organise their lives and daily routines as they please. Some of them have fled from family; others lost their families in the war against IS.

Nisreen Al-Ali is twenty-six years old and a representative for the women's association in Manbij close to Aleppo. She writes to me:

> Our women's association is a social, cultural, political, economic, ecological and intellectual organisation. It is a point of contact for all women in the regions freed from IS; Manbij, Raqqa, and Deir ez-Zor. We try to unite the women of these regions, regardless of religion and background. Personally, since the revolution I have found more self-confidence and it has become easier for me to publicly voice my opinions on societal issues.

Around the same time that I received these responses from Parween Muhammad Amin Youssef and Nisreen Al-Ali, someone writes to me on Instagram. She wants to remain anonymous. A week later, I can't find the message anymore – I've lost it in my inbox, a graveyard of started conversations. But I remember what she said distinctly, and I will rewrite it in my own words here:

> Not everything is as they make it out to be in Rojava. I lived there, and my family still lives there. Yes, official roles are equally distributed between men and women, but it is still the men who always make the decisions. The peaceful coexistence of different peoples doesn't work either; some groups are prioritised over others. Those who criticise the system are silenced or imprisoned.

In Rojava, the Democratic Union Party (PYD) is in government. Officials and supporters of the largest opposition party – some of whom have close ties to Turkey – repeatedly accuse the PYD of armed attacks, intimidation attempts and forced recruitment into Rojava's defence units.[148] While the people are supposed to make decisions in the communities and regions democratically, no general elections across Rojava's entire territory have yet taken place.

Critics have also accused the PYD of cooperating with the Assad dictatorship. After the withdrawal of US troops – who had previously supported the liberation of Rojava from IS with airstrikes – Russia facilitated a military agreement with the Syrian dictator to protect Rojava from Islamist militias and Turkish troops. Armed groups who aligned with the Assad dictatorship had control over various bases and checkpoints in Rojava. In some streets, Assad's portrait was pitched above the ruins of homes. However, the PYD insisted that their alliance with Assad was only a temporary arrangement to guarantee the region's security.[149]

A part of the Arab and conservative Muslim population, especially in Raqqa – once the self-proclaimed capital of the Islamic State – rejects the Kurdish-dominated autonomous administration.[150] But they have shown that the system of self-government does work in other Arab cities, former co-chair of the PYD Salih Muslim explains amid tensions in 2017: 'and we will show it in Raqqa too … the Arab peoples living in the north of Raqqa accept our system.'[151]

Tensions between ethnic groups have been present in this region forever; it is no new development. However, in recent years, conflicts have largely been focused on the distribution of scarce resources, such as water and oil.

Turkey is withholding access to the water of the river Euphrates: the region's main source of water located along Turkey's border with Rojava. In 2019, Turkish troops took control of Rojava's central water pumping station, and the population has been suffering from water scarcity and electrical outages ever since. The air is dirty, the harvests meagre and the food barely affordable.[152] Many cities still lie in ruins. Afrîn is still under occupation. In the wake of Turkey's military offensives, IS is reorganising and regaining strength.

How can we create a fairer society if internal and external forces continue to bring forth new forms of violence and hate? Will the oppressed be forced

to become the oppressors? What good can transformative justice bring when people are starving?

In a state of war, can there be space for anything other than hate, or revenge?

‘I think Rojava is a model for the pursuit of a democratic society without hate.’

That is the response I received from a friend, who was born in Germany and moved to the Kurdish region approximately ten years ago – first to the south, and then to Rojava. She is active on a committee of the women’s confederation Kongra Star, which represents the Rojava women’s revolution internationally.

> Over the past 200 years, occupying states have taken every means of self-government away from us, and in doing so, they have induced a type of amnesia. We no longer know how to govern ourselves, how to rely on our own power and self-defence. Rojava is in the process of re-learning how to do this.
>
> And it is by no means easy.
>
> Genocide and the founding of oppressive nation-states have severely damaged the century-old tradition of neighbourliness in the region. We are now working on rebuilding this culture of democratic cooperation. To do so, we must overpower the hate that is passed down from generation to generation.
>
> That is why Rojava’s revolution is ultimately an internal revolution, one that takes place in our heads and our hearts. We are trying to find ourselves again, to become ourselves again. We call that *xwebûn* in Kurmanji.[153]

Becoming ourselves.

Changing ourselves.

I ask my friend how justice can be achieved. Through revenge? She tells me, she doesn’t believe justice can come from revenge.

> The mindset of ‘as you do unto me, so will I do unto you’ is as old as the patriarchy itself. Very early on in the history of the patriarchy,

> women were made into objects of revenge – men took revenge on other men by raping their wives or forcing their women to remarry. Revenge is usually carried out to restore one's honour. So, when one does not take revenge, their honour is lost.

But, be honest, do you not feel hate? Or the desire for revenge?

> I consider one form of revenge to be legitimate, and that is revenge taken against the 'enemy'. Against an attacker, against the Turkish occupation or IS. We are facing war. Our land is occupied. Every day our loved ones are being murdered, and the Turkish state remains unpunished. That provokes anger. Maybe even hate. Many people have joined our liberation struggle for this reason. But not to exercise blind revenge; to choose a form of revenge that changes our own life and gives it meaning. This mindset is central to the Kurdish liberation movement. It shows that anger and hate for the enemy have to be transformed in order to become a source of strength and resolve.

The women of Rojava say that the revolution is not over. That a revolution means to struggle, to object and to reflect. Struggling, objecting and reflecting; they have been practising for ten years. In ten years, they have established justice and reconciliation committees. Many, many women have divorced their husbands; may they live a fulfilling life – my mother sends her best wishes. May they live a life where they do not have to be on constant alert. In ten years, the people of Rojava have tried out ecological forms of labour and production that do not lead to the eradication of natural resources, that do not run wells dry.

Ten years is an eternity when you are in danger of extermination and starvation. It is but the blink of an eye in the history of a society pursuing a new order and language of tenderness.

And ten years from now, writing will still be shaped by fear, violence, contradictions and longing.

The fixation is crucial.

persevere

strive

negotiate
object
hide
your rights
bombs fall
groan
yell
ash
become yourself
change yourself
care
provide
anticipate
suspect
listen
run
the palms in Antalya
Rojava means sunset
daylight in your eyes
keep writing
my parents
my temples
my computer screen
my fear
my cousins
our hate
my cursor

I said before that the land of Kobanê is peppered with brown. But now, when I zoom in on street view, I see a whole lot of green.

*

‘Man is motion toward the world and toward his like. A movement of aggression, which leads to enslavement or to conquest; a movement of love, a gift of self, the ultimate stage of what by common accord is called ethical orientation. Every consciousness seems to have the capacity to demonstrate these two components, simultaneously or alternatively.’[154]

*

I like to think back to the room with the sunflowers. I don’t like to think back to the person that I was supposed to be, the person that I sometimes still am. I wish that I didn’t have to look at my mother with hate in my eyes. I wish that I didn’t have to wish my parents were dead. I wish that the first language I learned was not the language of punishment. I wish that we could all have the time to put our heads together and solve all the puzzles of the world, with patience and tenderness. To take apart fear, piece by piece, to fill in tenderness, corner by corner, row by row, glance by glance, only to then scramble it up and lay all one thousand of its promising pieces out on the table again, like an invitation. Come, sit. Let us talk your ear off; let your thoughts wander like our eyes and hands over this chaotic jumble. We are settled here now, in the hate and tenderness, in the unease and softness, in this place of simultaneity. Our hearts are decorated with plastic garlands of sunflowers, and they are tied together. They bloom and wither. And one day, we will move on.

Acknowledgements

This book was never supposed to be written. My agency, my publisher and I had originally agreed on a different topic, and the contract had already been signed. This book was supposed to be entitled: ‘How to swear and curse without being racist, sexist, ableist or otherwise discriminatory’.

A few years ago, I had organised a workshop of the same name. I thought – everyone needs to express themselves when they’re angry, enraged or full of hate. Why not talk about how to do it without stigmatising groups of people who are already being discriminated against?

What was originally meant to be funny, suddenly became serious. Clubs, broadcasters and university groups began to book the workshop. The emails started to pile up. I was both astonished and delighted! Or to put it another way: I was young and needed the money. And it seemed that even senior citizens from small-town Bavaria had the desire to learn. My workshop transformed the unease and discomfort, which people feel when addressing racism and other forms of oppression, into light-hearted and creative group work. And that is exactly why it is so abhorrent to me now.

But that is not the only reason for my unease. I am still convinced that nothing can justify using racialised people, sex workers (and their children) or people with disabilities for weak punchlines and shallow insults. And I am still convinced that taking a closer look at our swear words and insults can be very revealing – it can tell us a lot about our self-conceptions, both individual and collective, and about what is positively and negatively evaluated in our society. And how these patterns of evaluation become ingrained in our everyday perceptions and reactions to the world.

Yet at the same time, I know that if we stop using these words, our society will not be fundamentally more just. And paraphrasing, sugar-coating or using euphemisms won’t help either – as we often do in the case

of poverty. Instead of *poor people* or *poor areas*, we say *low-income earners* and *under-resourced areas*. These euphemisms are misleading and wrong. There is nothing to sugar-coat about poverty.

My point is that the dominant systems and conditions of the world are turning it into a rotting swampland. And sifting our fingers through the dirty, rotten mud in search of insults and swear words that remain untarnished is fruitless work. In such foul conditions, every word is in danger of contamination. This is not an admission of defeat – as a writer, I will always try to rescue words from the swamp – but I hope that goes a way to explaining why I didn't write an entire book on the subject.

'I don't want to do this, I don't want to do this, I don't want to do this', I said to myself all summer like a broken record. 'I hate the idea of writing this book, I hate it, I hate it, I hate it.' And after a thousand times, I decided I would write a book about hate, or nothing at all.

I would like to thank all the people who lent me a sympathetic ear and a kind word during this time and emboldened me in my unease and my hatred.

I would also like to thank:

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I wish to thank my mother, my sister, my friends and all my other guides along the way, whose warmth, tenderness and dependability carry me

through life and keep me from sinking into despair in this often seemingly endless swampland. You are forever my favourite people.

Notes

Preface to the English Translation

1. The German phrase ‘Friede, Freude, Eierkuchen’ directly translates to ‘Peace, Joy and Pancakes’. It is a phrase deeply entrenched in German culture and likely emerged post–World War II, where in the wake of conflict and destruction, the simplest of ingredients had to be used for a meal to celebrate peace, unity and togetherness. However, this phrase now more commonly finds ironic usage, referring to a culture of ignoring or avoiding problems and conflicts instead of addressing them, and celebrating a state of peace and harmony that is only superficially intact.
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